Civil Society in Egypt
Represented by two Egyptian newspapers

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Sammanfattning

Bakgrund & Problem

Det Egyptiska civil samhället verkar under en mängd formella restriktioner och regeringens hämmande politik har förhindrat utvecklingen av autonoma organisationer, vilket har bidragit till att de har förlorat makt och påverkan. Trots detta har de civila samhälls organisationerna i Egypten ökat i antal, omfattning och påverkan och pressen har fått relativt ökad yttrandefrihet. Med hänsyn till detta undersöker föreliggande uppsats det samtida Egyptiska civil samhället i praktiken genom två Egyptiska tidningar; Al-Ahram och Al-Wafd.

Syfte

Syftet med föreliggande uppsats är att undersöka vad Egyptiska tidningar beskriver om det civila samhället.

Metod

Metoder som har använts i denna uppsats är begreppsutveckling och begreppsutveckling kombinerat med innehållsanalys på tidningarna; Al-Ahram och Al-Wafd.

Referensram

Denna uppsats presenterar ett teoretiskt ramverk där begreppet civilt samhälle och dess omtalade organisationer, NGOs analyseras. Dessa begrepp sätts därefter in i ett Egyptiskt sammanhang. Teorin ligger till grund för empirin där två tidningar; Al-Ahram och Al-Wafd granskas och analyseras.

Analys och slutsats

Resultat från tidningarna presenteras i analysen. I slutsatsen analyseras teorin i förhållande till resultaten från den empiriska delen. I diskussionen ges reflektioner över studien och de tillämpade metoderna diskuteras.
Abstract

Background & Problem

The Egyptian civil society operates under a number of formal restrictions and the government’s repressive policy has held back the emergence of autonomous organisations and made them lose their power and impact. Nevertheless, civil society organisations in Egypt have grown in number, scope of activities and impact. In addition, the press has got relatively greater freedom of expression. Taking this evolution in account, this essay examines the contemporary Egyptian civil society in practice through two Egyptian newspapers; Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd.

Purpose

The purpose of this essay is to examine what is depicted in Egyptian newspaper about civil society.

Method

The methods used in this essay are conceptual development and conceptual investigation combined with content analysis of the newspapers; Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd.

Theoretical framework

This essay presents a theoretical framework over the concept of civil society and its renowned organisations, NGOs. These concepts are then put into an Egyptian context. The theoretical framework builds the base for the empirical part where the two newspapers; Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd are scanned and analyzed.

Analysis and Conclusions

Results from the newspapers will be drawn in the analysis. In the conclusion the theory is put in relation to the empirical findings. In the discussion a reflection over the study and the methods used are discussed.
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1 Introduction

Civil society has become a key concept and a central quest in the search for paths to democracy and liberty in many parts of the world. This search has been mainly notable in Egypt. An increasingly totalitarian state has sought in recent decades to project an image of democracy but at the same time attack and undermine all potential bases of social autonomy and political action.

Although the Egyptian constitution protects the right to freedom of expression and forbids censorship of the press, the government has used laws and emergency powers to stifle the use of these rights. For instance, the ability to establish political parties and independent trade unions is highly controlled. Egyptian NGOs have long been burdened by cumbersome laws and inefficient government bureaucracy. These restrictions have profoundly affected the Egyptian civil society. Nevertheless, civil society organisations in Egypt have grown in number, scope of activities and impact and the press has got relatively greater freedom of expression.

The presidential election of 2005 is the first-ever multi-party election in Egypt’s history and it was overseen by Egyptian judges. This may be seen as a sign of progress for the Egyptian civil society. 2005 was an eventful year in Egypt from a political aspect and the media coverage and the political debates have been intense. Media plays an important role in civil society by enhancing development and stimulating grassroots participation. It can be seen as an open arena where people can express their own ideas and where alternative points of view are provided. Today, different civil society groups are demonstrating more often and they frequently express their disappointment with the regime in media. To examine civil society in practice, an analysis of two Egyptian newspapers; Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd was made to see what they depict regarding contemporary Egyptian civil society. The following question arises when putting the theory in relation the empirical findings: Is civil society an appropriate concept to discuss from a Middle East perspective?
1.1 Background

In *Islam in Contemporary Egypt*, Sullivan and Abed-Kotob mention Augustus Richard Norton, who applies the framework of civil society to the Middle East in general. Norton argues that civil society is found in the public sphere “where a mélange of associations, clubs, guilds, syndicates, federations, unions, parties and groups come together to provide a buffer between state and citizen” (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 2). He assumes that a vital and autonomous civil society is a necessary condition of democracy, though not a sufficient one, and that the ‘citizenship’, with associated rights and responsibilities is an essential part of the concept. However, civil society is not just a mélange of different forms of associations; it also refers to quality and civility. Civility implies tolerance, the willingness of individuals to accept disparate political views and social attitudes to accept the deeply important idea that there is no right answer (Norton, 1995, p. 11-12). Civility implies not only tolerance of the other, but also attachment to the institutions which constitute civil society (Hashmi, 2002, p. 40).

Egypt is no democracy and its people are more like subjects than citizens, but it is a reasonable candidate for boasting civil society based on other reasons. Its active public sphere and thousands of associations, clubs, publishing houses, presses and other groups serve as a buffer between society and state. Also, Egyptian culture also value civility and tolerance (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 3). Despite these characteristics, many scholars refuse to designate Egypt as a ‘civil society’ primarily on philosophical grounds. Such scholars characterize the civil society concept and analytical framework as a Western notion that is not applicable to Egypt or other non-Western societies. Some Western scholars argue this case by stating that non-Western societies simply cannot develop along European trajectories. It does not mean that Western and Eastern societies cannot be compared, however, it means that scholars must expand their frameworks and theories. Chatterjee argues, in *Islam in Contemporary Egypt*, that although civil society is quite limited to the Western experience, it is nonetheless ‘a particular form of a more universal concept’, that is, community. As theories of political development expand, advanced and revitalized political thought with new insights and new evidence could be brought from studying non-Western states. This is more interesting and productive than basically trying to incorporate the evidence found in non-Western settings into pre-existing categories and arguing whether they fit or not (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 3).
1.2 Purpose
The main purpose of this essay is to examine the depiction of civil society in Egyptian press. This essay seeks to give a picture of Egyptian civil society by scanning and analyzing two newspapers; Al-Ahram (state-controlled) and Al-Wafd (opposition). The concept of civil society is developed and examined in a theoretical framework and thereafter put into an Egyptian context in the empirical part of the essay.

Questions this essay attempts to answer are:
- What is civil society in theory?
- How is the relation between civil society and state?
- What relation do the civil society organizations have towards the state?
- What affects and makes it possible for NGOs to be active?
- Describe the media environment and role in Egypt
- What do the Egyptian newspapers depict concerning civil society? Which are the depictions of civil society in media in contemporary Egyptian society?

1.3 Limitations
The essay is limited to print media since an analysis of Egyptian newspapers is made. I was in Egypt during June and July 2005 which permitted me to collect the newspaper material and get a general impression of Egyptian society. Another means to examine civil society could have been broadcast media. However, since I did not carry out my research in Egypt I found it more convenient to examine print media.

1.4 Disposition
The essay is divided into twelve chapters and consists of two parts, a theoretical and an empirical part. The first chapter contains the introduction part where the purpose is explained. Chapter 2 describes the methods used and the course of procedure for the essay.

Chapter 3 and 4 constitute the theoretical part of the essay. The essay begins outlining the concept of civil society from a historical and contemporary perspective in chapter 3. Chapter 4 traces the historical background of the emergence of different civil society organisations in both the north and the south and deals with various conceptualizations and definitions of NGOs. At the end of each chapter there is a conclusion that highlights the important features of the concepts that will be examined in an Egyptian context.
The empirical part begins with chapter 5, which examines civil society in Egypt and the relation between civil society and the state through the three different state regimes. Chapter 6 examines NGOs in Egypt and what relation the civil society organizations have towards the state as well as what affects the organisations and makes it possible for them to be active in Egypt. Chapter 7 focuses on the religion and its relation to civil society in Egypt from a historical perspective. In order to make a media analysis a description of the media environment and role in Egypt is provided in chapter 8. Chapter 9 provides a background of important political events that occurred in Egypt in 2005. Results from the newspapers will be drawn in the analysis in chapter 10. In the conclusion the findings from the newspapers are viewed in the light of the theory. The essay ends with a discussion in chapter 12 where a reflection on the study and the methods used is provided and proposals of further studies are given.
2 Method

The methods used in this essay are of qualitative nature. The characteristic of a qualitative analysis is that the researcher tries to penetrate deeply into a problem by using a set of little material (Svenning, 2003, p. 159). In general, the qualitative analysis often deals with more complex themes than the quantitative analysis. The qualitative data is more sensitive and exemplifies more while the quantitative data is more precise but generalizes more (Svenning, 2003, p. 69-75). A qualitative method is used when you want a deeper and a more fundamental knowledge in a certain environment and also to see how things developed over time. A qualitative method describes “what is there” rather than “how is it there”. Interviews, observations, and document analysis are all included in the qualitative methods (Repstad, 1999, p. 14).

The methods used for the theoretical framework are conceptual development and conceptual investigation. The category conceptual development holds the early stages on the way towards a complete description or explanation. Common for the conceptual development studies is that they do not claim to reach statements about how the reality looks like and is intertwined. I agree with Esaiasson et al. in *Metodpraktikan. Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad* that a conceptual investigation study is about to bring order in an already existing discussion around a social phenomenon. In a simplified way, a conceptual investigation study contains the following steps: 1) find and collect what has been written about the concept; 2) sort the different definitions of the concept that were found and bring out what looks like being the core and what differs between the various definitions; 3) try out whether one or several definitions are logically consistent; 4) try out whether one or several definitions are possible to use in empirical research; 5) take a position if possible on the “best” definition of the concept (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud, 2003, p. 34).

The essay starts with an outline how the civil society concept has developed throughout history. This facilitates the understanding of its contemporary meaning. Here, the method conceptual investigation is conducted. Several definitions of the concept are presented in the text and in the conclusion of the chapter I determine which definition that will be applied in the essay. The same method is applied to the chapter examining the NGO concept. After outlining the concepts the next step is to put them into an Egyptian context. In the chapters about civil society in Egypt and NGOs in Egypt the method conceptual
development is conducted. The presented definitions of the civil society and NGO concept in the summaries are now applied in an Egyptian environment and described from an Egyptian perspective.

2.1 Content analysis
For the purpose of this essay two Egyptian newspapers, Al-Ahram a state controlled party newspaper and Al-Wafd an opposition party newspaper have been scanned and analyzed. The reason why I have chosen Al-Ahram is because it is the largest newspaper in Egypt and also the largest Arabic paper in the world with Middle East, international and North America editions. Its circulation is nearly 1 million copies. Al-Wafd is one of the major opposition newspapers and a representative of the New Wafd party which is one of Egypt’s leading opposition parties. Its circulation is about 360 000 copies.

The period chosen is 19th of June, 28th of June-30th of June, 1st of July-4th of July, 10th of July-12th of July, 14th of July, 15th of July and 17th of July year 2005. The reason why 2005 was chosen is because it was an eventful year from a political aspect. For instance, the presidential election was the first-ever multi-party election in Egypt’s history. A few months later the parliamentary elections were held and during the year important amendments were approved. Noteworthy, is that I visited Egypt during June and July and therefore it was practically possible to get hold of the newspapers. Furthermore, I am aware of not providing detailed information about the circulation of the two newspapers and how they are distributed across the country. This is simply because it has been difficult to find such information. However, the numbers of copies distributed per day and general information about Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd is given in chapter 8. The reason why media in general and print media in particular was used as a means to examine the depiction of civil society in contemporary Egypt is because of its important role for the freedom of speech and its important role in civil society in enhancing development and stimulating grassroots participation.

Every headline in each newspaper was read and when any word connected to civil society, for instance civil society organisations, was mentioned a note was made. My language proficiency in Arabic is not sufficient to fully understand the content and written language in the newspapers. Therefore, I used the help of my father and aunt, who are native in Arabic, to read through the titles in the newspapers. Thereafter I decided whether the articles were relevant for the purpose of the essay or not. To work with a second and third
person always increases the risk of information-bias, since the message has to be decoded. It would have been preferable to make the reading myself since the risk of bias in the interpretation would have been reduced. However, this was not possible.

The qualitative method used in this essay is called content analysis or qualitative textual analysis. Content analysis is an accepted method of textual investigation, particularly in the field of mass communication (Silverman, 2001, p. 123). It is since long time an established branch of sociology, but also within other social sciences, mainly political science that has worked with content analysis of political texts (Svenning, 2003, p. 156). In content analysis, researchers establish a set of categories and then count the number of instances that fall into each category (Silverman, 2001, p. 123). However, in this essay questions to the texts were asked to find out what the Egyptian newspapers bring about regarding the civil society. To use content analysis, an analysis instrument, which indicates what to search for in the material must be constructed. A coding scheme has been prepared, which comprises the following questions; who has said?, what was said?, what are the consequences? These questions were asked to the newspapers. The first question aims to find the different civil society actors in the articles, for example, a political party. The second question concerns what the civil society actor/actors have said and the last question whether there were any consequences from that. Additionally, codes were used to categorize whether the articles were a protest against the regime, a support to the regime or if only civil society organisations were involved and if there were any consequences from the protest or the support. Since many items did not fit the above mentioned categories, another category called “others” was added. This is because I am open to other descriptions in the items and occurrences of other actors that might be of interest for the purpose of the essay. Also, the different actors involved in the newspapers got a specific code, for instance, the political parties got A^P as a code. These codes facilitated the finding of the civil society actors which were later on presented in the analysis. Thus, the number of words has not been compared but the occurrence of descriptions.

The crucial requirement is that the categories are sufficiently precise to make it possible for different coders to arrive at the same results when the same body of material, such as newspaper headlines is examined. In this way, content analysis pays special attention to the issue of the reliability of its measures, ensuring that different researchers use them in the same way and to the validity of its findings through describing the content of the information (Silverman, 2001, p. 123).
2.2 Source criticism

The information society makes great demand upon journalists, researchers and citizens to critically value a never-ceasing flow of information. Today, anyone can quickly reach the whole world with a lot of information via internet or e-mail. The development creates multiple information but also increases the risk of spreading incorrect information. Therefore, a critical attitude towards all kinds of sources is necessary. Source criticism is a set of method rules that are used to value the veracity and to assess the reliability of the information. The rules are an aid to systematically value and interpret statements about what has happened regardless if things has occurred some moment ago or some thousands years ago (Esaiasson et al., 2003, p. 303).

Internet is a new medium opening new possibilities. Thus, the problems encountered when we judge information on the internet are at least partially different from those we encounter when assessing written information. On the internet, all information, the useful and the useless shares the same space, side by side (Leth and Thurén, 2000, p. 142). It is very difficult to know whether internet sources are credible or not. As a help, four criteria can be applied when analyzing internet sources (Leth and Thurén, 2000, p. 143).

- **Time** is mostly a question of when the website was last updated.
- **Dependence** refers to whether different sources are independent. If two sources are independent, the credibility of assertions common to both of them increases.
- **Authenticity** refers to whether a source is genuine or invented.
- **Bias** is directed towards the researcher’s prejudice or interest in giving unreliable or biased information.

Validity of research is of great importance when collecting data. In order to avoid biased data, different types of literature and authors have been used to achieve a greater understanding for the object of my study. By carefully analyzing the collected data, with attention to issues of validity and reliability, my ambition was to select as trustworthy material as possible. This essay is based on secondary sources such as written records, articles, and documents from internet websites. An extensive and systematic search in library for written records was combined with intensive search on the internet. The theoretical framework is based upon a combination of printed sources, articles and internet sources. A number of sources are written by academics and scholars who write about the civil society and NGO concepts as such and in an Egyptian context. Most of the internet sources are presented as papers or reports at international academic institutions or from...
NGOs, United Nations Development organisations and International Labour Organisation (ILO). The four criteria mentioned in this chapter have been taken into consideration when collecting data for this essay. Thus, the academic quality of the material is high. Some other internet websites are derived from the search engine Google (www.google.se) and databases such as Libris and Julia (the main database for literature search at Jönköping University Library) have been used for the following keywords with different combinations; “civil society”, “non-governmental organisations”, “Egypt”, “Islam”, “Al-Ahram” and “Al-Wafd”. To find facts about the dissemination and circulation of Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd has been difficult. Al-Wafd has a homepage in Arabic, which has also made it more difficult to find the information looked for. Another reason why it is difficult to find information about Al-Wafd is because it belongs to an opposition party. However, finding information about Al-Ahram is easier since it belongs to the ruling party NDP. Al-Ahram has a homepage in Arabic and English.
3 Civil Society

The last two decades have witnessed a revival of the concept of civil society in academic debates, mainly as a result of struggles against communist and military dictatorships, especially in Eastern Europe and Latin America but also in the rest of the post-colonial world. The growing interest in civil society and its various agents, particularly NGOs, is frequently explained in relation to the diminishing faith in the necessity and efficacy of the state as an agent of development (Abdelrahman, 2004, p.10). This growing importance of civil society has not been matched by as rigorous a theoretical elaboration of the concept as that of the state. Civil society remains mainly undefined and there is conceptual confusion over what the term actually means and what could be included within its boundaries (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 3).

This chapter outlines the concept of civil society. Starting by a review of the history of the concept is essential in order to understand the differences between the new versions of the concept and their historical predecessors. It is important to mention that the contemporary discourse on civil society draws upon various theoretical traditions and it is not limited to only one strand. Hence, when speaking of civil society most of the literature makes as much reference to de Tocqueville and Adam Smith as to Gramsci and Hegel, thus making civil society the subject matter of both liberal and leftist political theory (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 19).

3.1 History of Civil Society

From Aristotle, Cicero, Hobbes and until the time of John Locke in the seventeenth century the term civil society was used interchangeably with political society and the state. It did not imply any kind of political society. For Aristotle civil society was equivalent to the ‘civilized’ city-states in Greece and stood in contrast to the barbaric states in other areas. For Cicero, by comparison, civil society was an urban society governed by civil laws (Karlsson, 1993, p. 76). He used the expression societas civilis which means “civil society”. The civil society is discerned as a community in contrast to other communities, small and large societies such as families, houses, relatives and brotherhood et cetera. However, the decisive factor is that the notion has the whole settled social life in mind, a politically organized society. Thus, this includes partly governing organs and partly social spheres and institutions (Dahlqvist, 1995, p. 172). Thomas Hobbes speaks about the civil commonwealth, which is the same as Cicero’s societas civilis. Another term that Hobbes used is “body
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politic”. Like Cicero he meant the whole society and not part sphere. To Hobbes civil commonwealth was the complete opposite to the raw natural state, a politically organized society (Dahlqvist, 1995, p. 173). To John Locke civil society was a society governed by a state which upheld certain civil rights, principally private property, and which stood in contrast to both anarchy and despotism (Karlsson, 1993, p. 76). The expressions “society” and “the community” were used by Locke aiming at the whole collective of citizens. To use the expressions “society” or “civil society” with the meaning an isolated sphere was impossible in Locke’s world of ideas (Dahlqvist, 1995, p. 178). In short, to these classical philosophers, “to be a member of a civil society was to be a citizen, a member of the state and, thus, obliged to act in accordance with its laws and without engaging in acts harmful to other citizens” (Karlsson, 1993, p. 77).

In the sixteenth-century Western Europe the price of persuasion was defined by an audience committed to religion. This had been further strengthened by the fact that, whatever support had been given religious reform by economic and national impulses, the most sustained attack on the Middle Ages had been mainly expressed in the language of religion. It followed that the political theorist could not dismiss religion, but only takes up different attitudes towards it. Before the conventions controlling political discourse could be changed, the intensity of religious conviction amongst the audience had first to be undermined by scepticism, indifference and by decades of bitter and expensive religious wars. Also, the practical relevance of political ideas was closely tied to religion, if for no other reason than that religious turbulence presented one of the main threats to political stability. The new states of Europe might be politically autonomous in the practical sense of being independent of the control of religious institutions, but they could not afford to be indifferent towards religion. Furthermore, Western political societies had relied for centuries on habits of civility whose content were supplied by Christianity. As late as the eighteenth century Voltaire, among other philosophers, was apprehensive of trying to govern a society in which the Christian ethic had lost its hold. Nationalism and patriotism had not yet reached a position of being able to provide from their own resources a code of civic conduct independent of religion (Wolin, 1960, p. 197).

By the end of the seventeenth century, state domination was seen as over governing of society and thus the state had to be restricted and its role reduced. Thinkers like J.S. Mill and de Tocqueville advocated a pluralist and self-organizing civil society that would necessarily result in a state of natural harmony and would only be hindered by state
intervention. It was the first time in political theory that the distinction between the state and civil society was made explicit. Furthermore, these attempts mark the first time that civil society was put side by side with the state (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 20).

Although the first usage of the concept dates back to the seventeenth century, it was in the nineteenth century that the school of classical political economy made a distinct contribution to political theory by relocating the political discourse from the state to civil society (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 20). It follows that, its modern meaning emerges slowly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One major influence came from natural rights theorists, such as Thomas Paine who said that most actual governments continuously tend to threaten the individual freedom and natural sociability in civil society. The state is in perspective viewed as a necessary evil and civil society as a largely self-regulating sphere were the good life may be reached. The other major influence came from G.W.F Hegel. To him civil society was identical with the private and particularistic, and characterized by the self-seeking, conflicting and greedy striving of individuals and classes for mainly materialistic ends, while the state was seen as the embodiment of universal ethical value and rational civilization (Karlsson, 1993, p. 77). Hegel is the one who clearly formulates the distinction between state and society and furthermore the idea of “civil society” as an area distinguished from the state and the public (Dahlqvist, 1995, p. 191). Hegel’s idea of civil society is not a sphere without public control and regulation. It is instead through politics and administration a public organized social sphere (Dahlqvist, 1995, p. 195). Karl Marx mainly adopted Hegel’s view but was critical towards the contemporary states. According to Marx the tension between civil society and the state would disappear in the future classless society, where civil society would merge with the political sphere (Karlsson, 1993, p. 77). Antonio Gramsci reasoned in Marxist categories, however, he reached some conclusions that differed from his intellectual master. In Gramsci’s view, civil society was the site of rebellion against the orthodox as well as the construction of cultural and ideological hegemony, expressed through families, schools, universities, and the media as well as voluntary associations since all these institutions are important in shaping the political dispositions of citizens (Karlsson, 1993, p. 8). Despite the differences between Hegel, Marx and Gramsci, all the three created a tradition of civil society that was an alternative to that of the early liberals. They rejected the liberal representation of civil society as the sphere of rights, individualism and the market and saw this as a superficial analysis of the concept. Instead, they attempted to question the composition of civil
society. They all agreed that if civil society was to realize its potential and achieve its historic mission, it had to be organized and transformed through wise control and adequate leadership (Chandoke, 1995, p. 157).

Jürgen Habermas’s work contributed to that the theory of public sphere reached its highest levels of articulation in Europe. Habermas combined the Marxist tradition that expresses domination in civil society with the liberal tradition that emphasizes its role in guarding personal autonomy, and drew these different threads together through a complicated sense of theoretical constructs concerning ‘communicative action’, ‘discursive democracy’ and the ‘colonization of the life world’. A healthy civil society for Habermas is one “that is steered by its members through shared meanings” that are constructed democratically through the communications structures of the public sphere. Today, these ideas are echoed by theorists and activists on the left who see civil society as the site of progressive politics, in other words, the social basis of a democratic public sphere through which a culture of inequality can be dismantled (Karlsson, 1993, p. 9).

During the last two decades, development discourse has witnessed a major shift towards a new dominant paradigm, with civil society as its framework and NGOs as its most active agents (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 1). Both Marxists and neo-liberals criticized strictly the role of the state in the development process that was born out of Keynesian economics and dominated development thinking in the 1950s and 1960s. Marxists criticized the state for its dependence on the capitalist system and inability to achieve a more egalitarian redistribution. Neo-liberals blamed heavy state intervention in the economy, large public sectors and government subsidies for poor economic performance and market stagnation. The critics called for alternative models of development in which the role of the state in development would be redefined. The result was an ideological convergence creating new domination of anti-government feeling in development discourse. Although the 1970s witnessed a resurgence of support for the state which called for ‘bringing it back in’, the 1980s were characterized by civil society and people-centred development. Civil society gained more currency after new social movements contributed to the overthrow of military regimes in Latin America and the end of decades of communist rule in Eastern Europe. In contemporary development discourse, civil society and NGOs have become flag-bearers of political and social freedoms, poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor and marginalized, as well as champions of the process of democratization in the Third World countries (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 2).
3.2 Contemporary meaning of Civil Society

In the contemporary ‘revival’ of the idea of civil society, the concept has come to mean different things to different people. Different thinkers have stressed different aspects of the concept as well as different historical sources and traditions as relevant to its contemporary usage. The result is a great ambiguity and confusion about the idea of civil society, which has come to mean one set of principles and practices to thinkers working in the liberal tradition of politics and another to their more conservative critics (Seligman, 1992, p. ix).

The concept is used in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes, functioning as a pragmatic rather than a theoretical concept. It is often used loosely to mean either society as opposed to the state or, more precisely, as an intermediate sphere of social organisation or association between the basic units of society, families, firms and the state (Burnell and Calvert, 2004, p. 8). Depending on whose version one follows, civil society is either a specific product of the nation state and capitalism, or a universal expression of the collective life of individuals at work in all countries and stages of development but expressed in different ways according to history and context. Since nation states in the developing world are mainly a colonial creation and the market economy has only a fragile hold, civil societies in the south are bound to differ from those in the north (Edwards, 2004, p. 3). Some see civil society as one of the three sectors along with the state and the market, separate from and independent of each other through overlapping in the middle. Some claim that only certain associations are part of civil society, voluntary, democratic, modern and ‘civil’ according some pre-defined set of normative criteria (Edwards, 2004, p. 4). Others insist that all associations qualify for membership, including ‘uncivil’ entities like Mafia, nationalist, ethnic or religious fundamentalist organisations on the one hand, and entities such as trade unions, chambers of commerce and professional associations on the other hand (Burnell and Calvert, 2004, p.8). The expression civil society, with the meaning a part sphere within society, has no theoretical background and no ideo-historical existence. There is simply no social theory or political theory in which it can be rooted in. The linguistic usage is a contemporary invention that has its origin in modern political and ideological need and it changes in time to ideological needs (Dahlqvist, 1995, p. 212).

In order to simplify empirical analysis some authors try to give the term civil society a more precise meaning. For instance, Abdelrahman mentions, Lise Rakner who restricts the term to organisations which actually interact with the state, as opposed, for example, to ‘remote community organisations, kinship groups, some religious societies and self-help groups
located in rural communities’ which ‘stand apart from the state and shun all contact with it’. Jean François Bayart links civil society with the notion of antagonism between state and society, restricting the term to those social organisations which embody ‘society in its relation with the state insofar as it is in confrontation with the state’ (Burnell and Calvert, 2004, p.8).

In most of the literature there is a conceptual confusion over what civil society actually means and what could be included within its boundaries. This confusion and the simplistic portrayal of civil society as the sphere of rights and freedoms have led to a growing body of critical literature which draws attention to the danger of equating civil society with everything that is ‘good’. There is nothing necessarily emancipatory about civil society, therefore, it should not be automatically equated with notions of freedom and equality.

Abdelrahman in *Civil society exposed* cites Allen who describes the notion of civil society as:

“Diffuse, hard to define, empirically imprecise, and ideologically laden. Analytically it is vacuous, and concepts such as class and gender contribute far more to understanding recent political change than ‘civil society’. Its popularity and continued employment rest on its ideological underpinning, notably on claims that [it] is necessarily distinct from the State, in opposition to the State, and the source of (liberal) democratic values and pressures” (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 3).

The picture of civil society as an entity separate from the state and necessarily better than it tends to ignore power relations within society. This exclusion is a consequence of regarding civil society as a homogenous entity, which is demonstrably not true. Civil society comprises various groups with different and often conflicting interests. These may be opposed to or in accordance with interests that the state supports (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 3). In this regard, Abdelrahman cites Stewart who puts forward the following formula:

“Groups within civil society may be allied with the State or opposed to it, or both at different times. They may also be co-opted by the State, in opposition to the State. The State itself is not necessarily the villain of the piece. Organizations within civil society… may lobby the State to introduce legislation which affects other civil society interests negatively” (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 3-4).

Hashmi argues in *Islamic Political Ethics*, that several components must be present for civil society to exist. In addition to the space separating the individual from the state, civil society includes two other principal components, that is, the existence of a complex of
Civil Society in Egypt

institutions and the prevalence of ‘civility’ in the social order and its relations among individuals. The network of autonomous institutions, family, groups, tribes, guilds, unions, clubs, associations and parties provide the buffer between the individual and the state and allows for the development of a participant society (Hashmi, 2002, p. 39-40). It follows that, civil society implies the existence of associations autonomous from the state and of individuals tolerant of others and accepting of institutions of civic order. These are institutions that allow for the development of democracy and citizenship in diverse spheres of life. Among these are institutions of market economy, competing political parties, independent judiciary, free press and voluntary associations (Hashmi, 2002, p. 40). In addition to the presence of associations catering to the varied interests of citizens in their social activities, civil society also involves state respect for a reasonable measure of societal autonomy, and acceptance of intellectual and political disagreement as a legitimate right, so long as it is bound by peaceful methods of individual and collective action (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 271).

3.3 Conclusion

Providing a precise definition of civil society has proven problematic. However, for the purpose of this essay, civil society represents different interests, views and values of the people (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 28). Civil society is broadly defined as a formal mélange of associations, clubs, guilds, syndicates, unions, parties and groups that come together to provide a buffer between state and citizen (Kassem, 2004, p. 87) and allows for the development of a participant society. These institutions permit individuals to express their attitudes, views and orientations. They allow for participation in civil life (Hashmi, 2002, p. 40). In short, civil society cannot be understood as a separate entity existing outside the sphere of politics or, indeed, that of a society (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 4). An essential feature of civil society is a large measure of respect for freedom of conscience and thought, not only by state authorities but more significantly by citizens (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 276). Another essential feature is the relation between civil society and religion from a historical perspective when analyzing certain countries.

To sum up, then, civil society is defined as an intermediate sphere between the individual and the state. In this regard, civil society represents interests of different sectors in society via, for instance, trade unions, professional syndicates and business associations. The concept also represents the idealist concern of society at large through human rights advocacy groups (Kassem, 2004, p. 87). Additionally, NGOs and other formal organized
associations are seen as constituting elements of civil society. The subsequent chapter will examine the relation between civil society organizations and the state and what affects and makes it possible for NGOs to be active.
4 Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

There has been a unique worldwide growth in the number, size and operational scope of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) since the early 1980s. More significantly, the role of these organisations has been dramatically redefined within the development discourse. NGOs have come to be considered major actors with a vital role in shaping a new world order. Some writers claim that we are witnessing a ‘global associational revolution’ which could prove to be as important to the late twentieth century as the rise of the nation-state to the late nineteenth century (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 40). This chapter traces the historical background of the emergence of NGOs in both the north and the south and deals with various conceptualizations and definitions of NGOs.

4.1 Historical origins and the evolution of NGOs

There have always been institutions and structures in the Third World as well as in northern countries, that have functioned either as supplements to or alongside State structure to respond to social concerns and problems caused by either physical, environmental or economic difficulties in their communities. In Egypt, for example, Sufi orders, guilds and other forms of informal community organizations were always very active in organizing and promoting interests of their members. The history of modern NGOs can be divided broadly into three periods: from the 1920s to 1950s, from the 1950s to the mid 1970s, and the neo-liberal age from the 1980s to the present (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 46).

4.1.1 1920-50

Modern NGOs have existed in the north since the First World War, however, the most crucial period in the rise of NGOs was the Second World War and the years immediately after, when many northern NGOs grew out of initiatives of middle-class individuals in response to the devastating effects of the war. Examples of such NGOs are the International Committee of the Red Cross, CARE, World Vision and Oxfam (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 46). Religion also played an important role in the proliferation of modern NGOs in the north and the south. In the north the creation of most voluntary organizations was inspired by Christianity, through the activities of various churches and missionary groups. The efforts of these NGOs were concentrated principally on relief work, helping the victims of war and the reconstruction of a Europe devastated by the war (Clark, 1991, p. 34). Modern NGOs arrived in the south during the colonial period in the
form of churches and missionaries, who largely worked in areas of health and education. In some cases, they inspired the evolution of local NGOs, either in imitation or as a reaction against imported ideologies and religions. Egypt is a classical example in this regard. Egyptian NGOs sprang up in the first quarter of the twentieth century to defend nationalist and religious ideals and ideologies in the efface of missionary groups which were seen to be acting as agents of Western anti-Islamic ideologies by providing social services to the poorest parts of the population. At the same time, different groups of the Egyptian middle classes which support modern Western values found in NGOs a fascinating model to follow, which would help them achieve a Western model of progress (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 47).

4.1.2 1950s to mid 1970s

The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed an important expansion of northern NGOs of the scope of their work in Third World countries. This period was characterized by increasing interest among national governments in NGO work and they increasingly started to fund some NGO projects. It was then that the co-financing system i.e. financing projects through combined contributions by NGOs and government came into operation. The first governments to become involved in co-financing projects were those dominated by the Christian Democratic parties in most of the European countries as well as Canada and Australia (Theunis, 1992, p. 7).

Far from developing spontaneously in many Third World countries, NGOs, evolved in many cases as a response to the increasing funds made available. On the supply side, there was an increased availability of official and voluntary foreign assistance. On the demand side, these new versions provided idealistic young professionals, who had benefited from widespread governmental investment in universities in the 1960s, a means to express their genuine commitment to the poor and an alternative to unemployment, dead-end government jobs, or migration to the developed counties (Fisher, 1998, p. 7). Whether these young professionals were as idealistic as portrayed or not, NGOs, certainly offered and continue to offer attractive job opportunities to educated persons from higher-income groups in both the north and the south. In the south, it is argued, modern NGOs were established in the 1950s and 1960s as an aspect of both colonization and de-colonization processes and after independence, constituted an element of ‘modernization’ such as the case in Latin America ‘developmental ideology’. However, many of the regimes of newly-independent countries in the Third World were not always comfortable about the rising co-
option to tight control, in order to prevent any potential opposition that there groups might present (Abdelrahman, 200, p. 49). Korten maintains that many of the NGOs that figured prominently in struggles for independence were ‘later reduced to instruments of patronage politics and largely lost their ability to provide independence leadership’ (Korten, 1991, p. 27).

4.1.3 The neo-liberal age

The emergence of NGOs as a “third sector”¹ in the economy has been an important phenomenon of the 1980s. NGOs have been heralded as new agents with the capacity and commitment to make up for the inadequacies of the state and the market in reducing poverty. This trend has been reinforced by cumulative evidence from developing world on the positive contributions of NGO interventions and other initiatives to poverty reduction (Paul, 1991, p. 1). The prominence of the role given to NGOs in development since early 1980s is often explained as a reaction to the crisis facing state-sponsored development strategies as well as the failure of the Third World governments in handling development challenges (Abdelrahman, 200, p. 49). Authors that attempt to explain the rapid growth of NGOs since the 1980s see the growth of NGOs not as an internal and spontaneous response to state or market failure but rather as a response to the competition within the donor community to fund competent local NGOs with the necessary expertise and orientation to satisfy donor requirements. Donors shifted from funding states to funding NGOs as neoclassical economic thought in which national management and public expenditure is seen as interfering with market efficiencies, became more prominent (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 50).¹

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¹ The other two sectors are the market and the government. Market here refers to the sector of private, commercially orientated organizations. Government refers to state owned or state-controlled organizations. The boundaries between the sectors are not always clear-cut (Paul, 1991, p. 18).
NGOs are believed to be more efficient than government because they are smaller than states and hence more people-focused. NGOs might be able to deliver services that alleviate the immediate suffering of the poor in small and isolated communities, but they do not have the qualities that would enable them to offer solutions to larger structural problems (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 51).

The implementation of the IMF and World Bank’s structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) began in the 1980s, to help Third World countries to emerge from the debt crisis. SAPs entailed cutting public expenditures, ending social welfare measures such as subsidized food and health care and privatizing the public sector (Ozay, 1995, p. 120). The main concern of the adjustment programmes has been to reduce the role of the centralized and monopolistic state structures in production and service provision. Two policy instruments have been seen as being capable of achieving this end, namely privatization and NGOs (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 51).

### 4.2 Defining NGOs

There is no clear and precise definition of NGOs. This lack reflects the inadequate conceptualization of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the term is made to represent a far more complex reality than originally intended but still remains an incomplete representation. Either way, it is a sort of “catch-all” term. The term NGO is very broad, lumping together groups that have generally differing objectives and orientations. NGOs can be research institutions, professional associations, trade unions, community associations, and the like. The term NGO is a creation of the UN, which granted various pressure groups and international organisations official status in Article 71 in the Charter of the UN (Willetts, 1982, p. 70). An NGO is defined as “any organisation which is not part of a government and has not been established as a result of an agreement between governments” (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 41).

This is too broad to serve as a definition conveying precision and clarity. According to this definition, multinational corporations, the different UN agencies, professional associations, national liberation fronts, community-based associations, religious societies, recreational organisations, and so on, are all NGOs. A standard definition of NGOs, which shows many academics and practitioners’ understanding of these organisations and their role, is the World Bank’s working definition: “Groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and characterized by humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives...private
organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, or undertake community development’ (Korten, 1991, p. 21). However, this definition is both misleading and narrow. Research institutions can have commercial objectivities and it is not unusual for trade unions to invest in business enterprises, while many NGOs also pursue commercial activities which can earn them money. Moreover, the definition excludes many NGOs which are mainly dependent on governments, as well as some religious and other organisations whose purpose are not only humanitarian but also ideological and political (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 42).

There is no accepted definition of an NGO in general and the term carries different connotations in different circumstances. Nevertheless, there are some fundamental features. Obviously an NGO must be independent from the direct control of any government. Additionally, there are other generally accepted characteristics that exclude particular kinds of bodies from consideration. An NGO will not be constituted as a political party, it will be non-profit making and it will not be a criminal group, especially it will not be non-violent. These characteristics apply in general usage, because they match the conditions for recognition by the United Nations.

The boundaries can sometimes be diffuse, for instance, some NGOs may in practice be closely identified with a political party, many NGOs generate income from commercial activities, particularly consultancy contracts or sales of publications and a small number of NGOs may be linked with violent political protests. Yet, an NGO is never constituted as a government bureaucracy, a party, a company, a criminal organization or a guerrilla group (“What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”, 02-01-04).

In the last to decades attempts have been made to provide more specific classifications and definitions of NGOs. Private voluntary associations (PVOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), grassroots organisations, membership organisations and charities are some of the names used to specify which NGOs are being discussed (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 42). In the logic of the language, there is no difference between an NGO and a PVO, but NGO still carries neutral connotations and applicability to a diverse range of political actors, whereas PVO suggests moral approval of a more limited range of groups. In practice, it is impossible to agree any general terms to distinguish praiseworthy from unacceptable groups, either in domestic or in global politics, because such a distinction is a subjective choice made on the basis of each observer’s own value preferences (What is a
Grassroots organizations, for instance, are distinguished from national or regional organizations, which are relatively remote from the people who are supposed to be involved in and benefit from development and they are sometimes called local organizations.

Membership organizations are those set up and controlled by members to benefit themselves. Cooperatives would fit this definition. Advocacy organizations are differentiated from other NGOs involved in the development and relief work by being single-issue organizations, for example Amnesty International, and other rights and environment organizations (Cleary, 1997, p. 7). These groups try to lobby and influence public policy instead of only providing services directly. The organizations are usually staffed by professionals and activists and depend heavily or completely on foreign funding (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 8).

4.3 Different types and structures among NGOs
Over the past two decades, NGOs have become increasingly important actors in the international development and environmental arenas. Their range of activities is considerable and includes development, environment and human rights issues. Their areas of activity are equally widespread, being international, national and local. Some international NGOs such as Amnesty International, are single-issue-organisations drawing together individuals and other organisations concerned about the issue, others for example, the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) pursue more generalised sustainable development or environment goals. By far the greatest number of NGOs is to be found at the local level. Their activities include identifying and implementing activities intended to improve the quality of life of people at the local level. Such activities often include initiatives to improve health conditions, by for example, the supply of clean water, measures to reduce the burden facing women and addressing environmental concerns, e.g. through sustainable forestry, also efforts to empower local communities and marginal social groups, for example through literacy, small-scale credit schemes and the promotion of micro-entrepreneurship (Cleary, 1997, p. 1).

There are many ways in which NGOs are structured. The classical model is of a membership organization, co-ordinated in a geographically-defined hierarchy. Individual people work in local groups, which coordinate in provinces and then have headquarters in the capital city for the country as a whole. Such country-wide organizations are called
national NGOs. There are many small countries that are too small to have provincial structures. Smaller specialist NGOs may simply enrol individual members at the national level without having any local branches. Occasionally, individuals are enrolled at the international level. In large organizations, the international level seems quite remote and attracts little attention, even among the NGO’s own members. It should be noted that one of the ambiguities about the term, NGO, is whether it is referring to a local, provincial, national, regional or global body. Until the early 1990s, the matter was usually straightforward in academics, news media or political discussions. A vast majority of local and provincial NGOs never engaged in international activities. Therefore, NGO, by itself, often meant a national NGO and regional or global bodies were called international NGOs. National NGOs did engage in international development and humanitarian activities, however, with very few exceptions they were not in their own right participants in international diplomacy. When they wanted to exercise political influence at the global level, they did so through the appropriate international NGO. In the 1990s a lot of local organizations became active at the global level, especially on environmental and social issues. Since then, the term international NGO has not been used so much and NGO, by itself, has come to cover both national and international NGOs (“What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”, 02-01-04).

A minority of NGOs conform to the model of a global democratic hierarchy, in which any person may become a member. One variant is for the NGO to have subscribers or supporters, providing income, receiving newsletters and responding to calls for action, but not having any democratic control either over expenditure or over policy priorities for the organisation. This is common among altruistic NGOs, promoting social welfare and poverty alleviation and also among environmental NGOs. Another variant is for a specific status or participation in some activity to be a prerequisite for membership. Thus, trade unions are only open to those employed in certain occupations, which is sometimes very broadly defined. Similarly, professional, scientific and technical bodies are only open to people with relevant qualification. Such organizations may then be grouped on a functional basis rather than a geographical basis, before they form national and/or international federations. Trade unions do maintain democratic decision-making structures at least in principle if not always in practice. However, professional, scientific and technical bodies have professional norms that override democratic norms and members may be driven out for violating the professional norms. A third variant is a religious organization. The main
religions do all have complex hierarchies, from the local faith community through to global spiritual authorities. Authority is based on faith, a holy text and the charisma of individuals or a hierarchical tradition. To some it will be surprisingly to discuss trade unions, professional bodies and religious organizations as if they are NGOs. Indeed, the leaders of all three will usually deny they are NGOs. Nevertheless, they are treated on the same basis as NGOs throughout the UN system, with the exception of the special place for unions in the International Labour Organisation’s tripartite system of governance (“What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”, 02-01-04).

4.4 NGOs and their independence from governments

The most difficult matter about the independence of NGOs is whether they come under governmental interference. Individual governments do at times try to influence the NGO community in a particular field, by establishing NGOs that promote their policies (“What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”, 02-01-04). These NGOs created by government to serve its interests may be headed by government officials or members of their families and are sometimes referred to as Government-operated NGOs (GONGOs) (Korten, 1991, p. 30). Also, in authoritarian societies, NGOs may find it very difficult to act independently and they may not receive acknowledgement from other political actors even when they are acting independently (“What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”, 02-01-04). Discussions on NGO’s authority are often polarized. One side argues that one of the NGO’s greatest advantages is their independence from national governments. Another side argues that NGOs are presented as completely dependent on these institutions, with the effect that NGOs become more accountable to them than to their supposed beneficiaries.

However, a more balanced view points out the interdependence between NGOs and the state (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 51). John Saxby argues in *Who owns private aid agencies?*, that just as NGOs are dependent on governments for funding, governments have come to depend on the NGOs as their ‘delivery vehicles’ (Saxby, 1996, p. 38). There is a widespread prejudice that government funding leads to government control. In the field of human rights, it would damage an NGO for such a perception to arise, so for instance, Amnesty International has strict rules that it will not accept direct government funding for its activities. On the other hand, development and humanitarian relief NGOs need substantial resources to run their operational programs, so most of them readily accept official funds. Nominally, NGOs may appear to be independent when they design their own programs, but government influence can arise indirectly if the program is designed to make it more
likely that government grants or contracts will be forthcoming. On the other hand, confident experienced NGOs can appeal for funding for new approaches and in so doing cause government officials to re-asses policy. There is no clear method to identify the direction of influence without detailed knowledge of the relationship between an NGO and a government. Environmental NGOs may have either type of funding relationship. Conservation and research groups may happily obtain government funds to support their programs, some are innovative and some are not. Beyond these situations, radical campaigning groups may be unwilling and unable to attract government funds (“What is a Non-Governmental Organization?”, 02-01-04).

4.5 Conclusion

For this essay, an NGO is defined as an independent organization with the ambition to assist the poor and marginalized. The use of the term NGO will imply that all levels are included, while local, national or international will be used when the meaning must be restricted to that level. Furthermore, there is no difference between the term private voluntary organization (PVO) and non-governmental organization (NGO). NGOs and other formal organized associations discussed are seen as constituting elements of civil society. Thus, it is important to understand that these associations operate in relation to the state, that is, they affect and are affected by the state (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 4). For example, the state may affect and limit an NGO’s activity through laws, regulations and government funding which often leads to government control. However, some NGOs may also affect the state by influencing the public opinion.

After examining the civil society concept in this theoretical part of the essay, the following chapter will put the concept into an Egyptian context and examine the relation between civil society and the state through the different state regimes.
5 Civil Society in Egypt

Since the early 19th century, increasing social differentiation in Egypt has laid the objective basis for the formation of a civil society. Modernization efforts, particularly the expansion of education, Egypt's integration in the international economy and the emergence of national bourgeoisie contributed to the development of a working class and a professional middle class. These new classes came to demand the right of association for the professional groups they formed. The first groups to obtain such a right were those formed by the political elite, mainly lawyers and businessmen. The right to establish trade unions was not recognized until the 1940s, three decades after the first Egyptian professional association, the Bar Association, came into being (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 271). In Egypt most forms of popular participation today take place through civil society organizations. Egyptian civil society is generally regarded as a form of social life situated somewhere between the state and people. It involves a diverse group of agencies, organizations and NGOs and includes trade unions, professional syndicates and political parties (as opposed to parties' government) (UNDP, “Participation in Development”, p. 9).

The weakness of civil society in the Arab World in general, and Egypt in particular is inherently linked to the authoritarian nature of the political systems that exist. In this regard, Kassem cites Saad Ibrahim in Egyptian Politics as follows:

“The positioning of the relationship between state and society in “zero-sum” terms may be a misleading dichotomy. A strong state may not necessarily imply a weak civil society or vice-versa. In fact, most stable Western democracies represent cases of a strong civil society and a strong state. Similarly, in the Arab World, a more common case is that of weak civil societies and weak states (Kassem, 2004, p. 87).

A historical review was made in the theoretical part of the essay, in order to outline the concept of civil society. However, in this chapter, civil society in an Egyptian context will start from the 1950s, since it is interesting to follow the different state regimes and how the relation between civil society and the Egyptian state and the trade unions, professional syndicates, political parties and human rights groups have developed over time.

There is much to be understood about the nature and objectives of a regime based on its relationship with civil society. In turn, this relationship contributes to the development and character of any given civil society. As will be argued in this chapter, the development of
Egypt’s civil society has been hindered to a large extent as a consequence of the persistent authoritarian political system since 1952. The aim is to demonstrate the flexibility and survival tactics of a political system aiming to preserve its monopoly on power, as well as how tactics hinder the development of Egypt’s civil society (Kassem, 2004, p. 88).

5.1 Civil Society under Nasser state regime

Egyptian civil society in its most basic form can be described as having been incorporated and almost extinguished under the populist policies of the former president Gamal Abdel Nasser (Kassem, 2004, p.88). Under Nasser’s regime all political parties were banned and Egypt came to be ruled by a single-party political system. Nasser’s authoritarian regime had to use a number of tactics to ensure its control over society as a whole. These resolved around mobilizing the masses through the National Union party, a vehicle constructed specially to contain existing social forces by either dissolving them or reorganizing them along corporatist lines around ideas and patterns consistent with the regime’s ideologies or by repressing groups that were strong or which refused to be co-opted by the regime, the Muslim Brotherhood for example. Under Nasser, all forms of political opposition were, therefore, either crushed by force or co-opted by the state (Baker, 1978, 95).

Although other interest groups, such as professional syndicates, NGOs and worker’s unions where allowed to survive, they were only permitted a limited margin of freedom and were subordinated to the government’s firm control. The restructuring of civil society organisations was an ongoing process under Nasser. However, a 1956 decree annulling Articles 54 to 80 of the Civil Code, about the right of association, was a landmark in the changing state-society relations. After the annulment of those articles, all associations and NGOs were dissolved and forced to reapply for licences to the authorizing bodies, which was the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) in the case of NGOs. The process of relicensing was totally based on the whims of administrative regulation and judgment and on the priorities of the military rulers (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 94). In addition to the banning of political parties, the regime established in 1964 Law 32, also known as Law of associations. This law gave more power to MOSA and local governments to control, license and regulate the work of the different organisations (Kassem, 2004, p. 88). Furthermore, this law stipulated that in order to register, the organisation in question was required to stick to the condition that it not engage in any “political activities”. The term “political activity” is a rather ambiguous term which allows the ministry to use the law to frighten societies by
threatening to suspend their activities if they continued certain actions (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 282).

In addition to the broad definition of what constituted political activity, there were also an additional stipulation, Article 12 that gave the government the right to refuse an association if its “founding is not in accord with the security measures; or the unsuitability of the place health-wise or socially”. The same article provided the authorities the right to reject the establishment of an organisation “if the environment has no need for the services of another association” (Kassem, 2004, p. 89). This special stipulation, which was officially intended to prevent a redundancy in civil associations, can be interpreted as a mechanism that empowered the MOSA to exclude unwanted organisations from civil participation. Apart from Law 32, it is also noted that “bureaucratic tutelage over society since 1952 put a halt on traditions of private funding of civil associations…[while] on the other hand the complete take-over of the Waqf (Islamic public and private endowments) by the state was not compensated by the setting up of a new functional structure for private funding of civil activities and purposes” (Kassem, 2004, p. 89). With limited resources and membership the civil associations simply could not compete with the state. As a result, associations found themselves integrated into the formal state structure, dissolved or left useless. However, in the case of two main groups, trade unions and professional associations, the Nasser regime could not eliminate them, thus it focused on containing and controlling their development (Kassem, 2004, p. 89).

5.1.1 Trade unions

Nasser’s regime inherited a conglomerate of trade unions numbering nearly 500 with a registered membership base of 150 000 workers (Kassem, 2004, 89). While the regime applied heavy-handed tactics towards labour turbulence, Nasser was politically shrewd enough not to lose the potential power of labour. He had the support from workers. Many union leaders were eager to establish a trade union confederation, however, Nasser was not completely committed to the idea of singularity. The reason behind Nasser’s reluctance was the fear that a confederation would not simply unify the local unions but would also result in a concentration of union power. Put differently, although Nasser wanted to maintain support from the labour force, his main concern “was how to forge a support coalition without getting organisationally entangled with the popular sectors” (Kassem, 2004, p. 91). The Nasser regime implemented corporatist policies towards labour unions, which strengthened and selectively co-opted working-class organizations instead of crushing and
excluding them from the policy-making process (Bianchi, 1989, p. 126). Nasser adopted many liberal labour and trade union reforms especially at the time when he abolished all political parties (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 96).

One aspect that made it difficult to overlook the reorganisation of trade unions was the ever-expanding number of local unions and the following expansion of overall union membership. The labour law of 1952 was intended to attract workers to support the regime, the law meant among other things “the establishment of new unions required only registration with, but not approval from, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the power to close down existing unions was transferred to the judiciary” (Kassem, 2004, p. 91). Thus the number of unions more than doubled and the size of worker membership almost tripled. In this respect, the establishment of General federation of Egyptian Trade unions (GFETU) in 1975 can be seen as one of the first steps to contain and control the sprawling unions (Kassem, 2004, p. 91).

### 5.1.2 Professional syndicates

The expansion of the professional syndicates was most evident during Nasser’s regime, even though they existed from as early as 1912 with the establishment of the Bar syndicate. However, in contrast to trade unions, professional syndicates were never organized into a general federation or higher organisation. Rather, each syndicate was governed by the law under which it was established (Kassem, 2004, 96). Professional syndicates were one of the groups most manipulated by the regime to fake its hegemony. Changes in the regime’s policies towards the syndicates clearly reflected Nasser’s search for organisations that could mobilize the educated middle class around his leadership. Nasser realized soon that professional syndicates consisted of, and had the potential to reach and mobilize, the most educated and articulate sections of Egyptian society. However, the syndicates was not only a potential ally but also a potential threat to the regime as they could also organize the masses around ideas and demand that the regime was not willing to comply with (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 95).

Indeed, none of the professional syndicates were excused from governmental effort of control. For instance, a presidential decree issued in 1958 stipulated that all syndicate members wanting to enter syndicate council elections must first be member of the National Union. This move, as in the case of trade unions, was a tactic aimed less politicizing syndicate leaders and more at excluding dissenting individuals by denying them part
membership. The Arab Social Union, which came to replace the National Union, also became used as a tool to further contain the activities of professional syndicates (Kassem, 2004, p. 97). One out of many examples, that illustrates how the syndicates were forced to bend to the will of the regime, is the role of the Press Syndicate in supporting university demonstrations and mirroring the general discontents of the regime. This led to the implementation of Law 76 in 1970, shortly before Nasser’s death. The new law stipulated that journalists could not be granted syndicate membership without a university degree (Kassem, 2004, p. 98). That the journalists could not practice their profession without syndicate membership was an indirect effort by the government to control the number of individuals entering the profession. The diverse and relatively small membership base of professional syndicates in comparison to trade unions meant that the patterns of manipulation and control over labour could be extended to syndicates with relative ease. Worth mentioning is that by the time of Nasser’s death in 1970 the state was the largest employer of professionals, which along with the application of constructive laws to block potential bases of syndicates and also to incorporate them under the regime’s control (Kassem, 2004, p. 99).

5.2 Civil Society under Sadat state regime

Anwar El Sadat became president in 1970. His new political program consisted mainly of signing a peace treaty with Israel and introducing ‘infitah’, an open-door economic policy connected with the encouragement of local and foreign investment and freedom of private capital. Sadat realized that his potential supporters were on the right political spectrum. The ‘state bourgeoisie’ or the ‘bureaucratic elite’, who occupied high state offices but also ran their own private businesses, were the best strategically located social force and the most prepared to support Sadat’s policies and thus strengthen his power (Hinnebusch, 1990, p. 192). In other words, Sadat had to form a power block under the hegemony of the new elite (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 98). In return for their support, he had to adapt the state to make it consistent with the new conditions his policy had created. He could not advocate economic liberalization without allowing a margin of political freedom. Sadat had to relax the control of the state over society and allow certain social forces to express their interests. Therefore, he dismantled the single-party system his predecessor Nasser had created and permitted the re-establishment of political parties as an important feature of the new regime’s image of both economic and political liberalization (Zartman, 1988, p. 74). The National Democratic Party (NDP), which was a direct descendant of the Arab Socialist
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Union, remained the main and most powerful political party. New parties could only be formed with the government’s approval and provided they were not based on religion, class or region. This new margin of political liberalization also allowed interest groups, such as NGOs, to exercise more autonomy than they had under Nasser, on the condition that their activities did not challenge the basis of presidential authority. Sadat’s liberalization also co-opted opposition political activism (Hinnebusch, 1988, p. 5).

These controlled forms of pluralism were used to serve the regime’s interests. For instance, opposition to the regime was weakened by granting favours to certain interest groups and organizations that were not viewed by Sadat as presenting a real threat to his rule, while isolating and hunting down his most dangerous enemies. Sadat knew that the main opposition to his policies came from the leftists and from Islamic fundamentalists (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 98). Sadat appealed to rising Islamic sentiments and encouraged certain Islamist factions to become active in order to counterbalance leftist and Nasserite groups, which he thought pose the main threat to his regime, in addition to the Islamic fundamentalists outside the authority of the system (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 99). This tactic was reflected in the release of members of the Muslim Brotherhood who had been arrested under Nasser and who was allowed to resume their activities. Another illustration of his attitude is the increase in the number of Islamic NGOs registered with the MOSA. This attempt at manoeuvring different elements of the opposition failed in the end, when Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by a member of an Islamic group (Zartman, 1988, p. 76).

Sadat’s policy was reflected in a number of authoritarian actions and laws, including election manipulation and introduction of the law of ‘aib’, (Law of shame) that forbade any criticism of the regime as ‘unethical’. The last blow came in 1981 when Sadat arrested all his critics, both from the left and the right including members of political parties and professional syndicates. So, Sadat’s marginal concessions to political freedom were no more than a facade that masked the continuation of Nasser’s strategies of co-opting or repressing the most active social forces which posed a threat to the hegemony of the regime (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 99).

5.2.1 Trade unions

The strategies of containment and control of trade unions under Nasser were further developed and enhanced under Sadat. The dynamics of containment and control that were implemented before Sadat became president meant that even with a change in policy
Civil Society in Egypt

orientations, it remained possible to maintain the tactics of his predecessor over civil society. Sadat inherited from Nasser an economy that was underdeveloped and in debt (Kassem, 2004, p. 99). Because of the frustrating economic situation and his power struggle with Nasser’s old guard Sadat’s early years were marked by labour unrest and strikes. The waves of labour unrest in the mid-1970s were tackled with a mixture of coercive tactics and concessions to workers such as increases in wages and benefits. However, none of these waves of unrest were formally organized and coordinated by the trade unions on behalf of their members. Strikes were still illegal and the senior union leaders were not prepared to risk their own co-opted positions for the sake of the workers (Kassem, 2004, p. 100-101). The absence of formal representation and coordination of strikes by unions meant that while such protests were spontaneous in nature, they were easy for the security forces to quickly repress. However, the informal role of some local unionists in the coordination and organization of the wildcat strikes was not overlooked. The implementation of Law 35 of 1976 in regard to trade unions, included attempts to correct this predicament and reinforce governmental control over the entire union structure. For example, the law introduced a new indirect electoral system that further alienated union officials from their constituents and reinforced their dependence on the government (Bianchi, 1989, p. 129). The new electoral system tightened governmental control over the selection of union activists on all levels. Furthermore, the penalty for striking was increased to imprisonment with hard labour as a result of Law 3 of 1977 (Kassem, 2004, p. 102). While tightening government control of trade unions and repressing voices of dissent, Sadat attempted to conciliate the workers. For example, between 1977 and 1978 Sadat’s concessions included increases in pensions, salaries and minimum wage. The concessions were not insignificant, since they actually resulted in keeping the “workers’ wages ahead of inflation” (Posusney, 1997, p. 138).

The point, nevertheless, is that such concessions were presented directly from the president to the workers. This then allowed the president to appear to be voluntarily giving his support and good will on the workers unconstrained by any organizational body. Sadat’s tactics illustrate that although he was moving away from Nasser’s populist policies, the aspect of containment and control over civil society remained intact. The extension of such authoritarian policies was also evident within the sphere of professional associations (Kassem, 2004, p. 102).
5.2.2 Professional syndicates

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potential bases of syndicates and also to incorporate them under the regime’s control (Kassem, 2004, p. 99).

5.3 Civil Society under Mubarak state regime

“Mubarak inherited a regime lacking credible legitimating ideology or leading personality capable of attaching mass loyalties to the state and a faltering experiment in political liberalization. Indicative of the regime’s ideological bankruptcy were its attempts to portray itself as both Nasserist and Islamic, all the while following Sadat’s policies. In the absence of mass legitimacy, the Mubarak state regime further developed the combination of limited repression and limited liberalization pioneered by Sadat” (Hinnebusch, 1990, p. 198-199).

On the political front, Hosni Mubarak institutionalized a dominant party system, which consists of a large government party, the National Democratic Party (NDP) in the centre and array of small opposition parties on its left and right (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 108). The leftist National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP) that brings together intellectuals and working class activists behind an ideology of nationalist populism has become weak under Mubarak. An alliance of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and the Islamist camp led by members of the Muslim Brotherhood formed a very strong opposition bloc. This change in the configuration of the opposition shows not only the growing strength of the Islamic movement, but also how this new force has placed the regime, the right wing Wafdist party and the NPUP on the same side. The Wafdist party stands for a coalition of liberal professionals and landlords committed to more thorough economic and political liberalization (Hinnebusch, 1990, p. 200). This polarization between secular and Islamist forces has been the major characteristic of Egyptian politics and of civil society in the last two decades and has pervaded every sphere of the political and the social realms including civil society organizations, such as professional syndicates and NGOs. While this polarization does not fully reflect the complexity of the political situation in Egypt with the fluidity and interchange ability of its political groups, and in a way it is rather an oversimplification, it nonetheless, sets the scene for a clear political complex (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 108).

Civil society under the current Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, has witnessed considerable expansion (Kassem, 2004, p. 104). The last two decades have witnessed the relative multiplicity and activation of organizations in civil society. This has been reflected in relatively greater freedom of expression, especially of the press, the licensing of hundreds
of new publications, the growing numbers of political parties and the expansion in the number of officially registered NGOs (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 108). However, civil society remains a weak entity under Mubarak as under his predecessors. In the case of professional associations the restrictions have been evident and on the increase since 1990s, while the autonomy of trade unions has been marginalized to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish them from the state. Additionally, the emergence of independent human rights groups in the 1980s has resulted in a new battle for the government in trying to preserve its domination of power within civil society. Therefore, in addition to assessing the development of trade unions and professional syndicates since Nasser and Sadat, the relatively new phenomenon of human rights is analyzed below (Kassem, 2004, p. 105).

5.3.1 Trade unions
The co-optation of the trade union structure over the previous two decades has given little choice but to resort to wildcat strikes and spontaneous demonstrations in efforts to communicate their grievances to the government. While this began to emerge under Sadat, it peaked under Mubarak. The decline in benefits and pay for workers, the gradual easing of state subsidies and the end of guaranteed state employment for high school and college graduates were all part of the economic restructuring that Mubarak was forced to continue upon taking power. Thus, following a period of relative calm on the labour front following Sadat’s assassination, discontent began to re-emerge in 1984 as workers began to feel the effects of such policies. One example is the implementation of a 1984 insurance law that doubled the contribution of pension and health insurance plans for workers coincided with Mubarak’s decision to raise the prices on certain subsidized foods, resulting in an outbreak of isolated strikes and demonstrations around the country (Kassem, 2004, p. 105). To restore order the government promised not to raise the food subsidies and postpone the implementation of the new insurance law. What was remarkable was the openly pro-government position taken by trade unions during the protests. Union opposition in regard to labour protests and strikes came to be a well-known characteristic of the Mubarak era. The deterioration of relations between workers and trade unions reached a level whereby it was no longer uncommon for workers to challenge their own union representatives (Kassem, 2004, p. 107). The continued co-optation of union leaders into the political system means that under Mubarak presidency, it remains common to find individuals who represent workers and government at the same time. For example, the current president of the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (GFETU), Sayid Rashid, is also a
veteran member of the president’s ruling party (NDP) and a member and deputy speaker of the People’s Assembly. Additionally, twenty-one of the twenty-three federation heads are NDP members and at least ten GFETU leaders entered the legislature as NDP deputies in 2000 (Kassem, 2004, p. 109). Workers are organized into 23 trade unions that belong to the GFETU. Despite its large size, there is no evidence that the federation enjoys much credibility among its rank and file members. Collective protest movements undertaken by workers sometimes on a massive scale, have not been inspired by the federation’s leadership or leaders of such unions, but have been led mostly by dissident trade unionists or workers who had never been officials of trade unions at any level (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 274). The weakening and co-optation of trade unions and the economic situation will make the workers continue to depend on strikes and protest as their main possibility of communications with the state. The fact that 150 documented strikes and work stoppages took place in 2001 is one indication of this predicament. Yet, the government, intent on maintaining its power monopoly, does not see any reason to change the established patterns of domination and control over trade unions. Indeed, the unified labour law from 2003 further reinforces this assumption. The most prominent feature of the law consist in the few ‘concessions’ that have been made, the most important being the right to strike, but only on the condition that a strike be approved by the weak and regime controlled GFETU (Kassem, 2004, p. 111-112).

5.3.2 Professional syndicates
In contrast to trade unions, efforts to maintain dominations and control over professional associations under Mubarak have been complicated by two interconnected factors. First, the re-politicising of syndicates that began under Sadat expanded even further as opposition parties continued to cooperate with the syndicates sphere in their efforts to acquire some autonomy from state domination. Second, a new phenomenon emerged in syndicates that did not exist under Nasser or Sadat. This phenomenon involved the participation and infiltration of the Muslim Brotherhood into syndicates on a level that overshadowed all other opposition gains within this sphere. By 1992 the Muslim Brotherhood gained a landslide victory in the syndicate council lections of five of the country’s most prestigious and wealthiest professional syndicates, namely those representing the engineers, doctors, lawyers, pharmacists and scientists (Kassem, 2004, p. 112). Alarmed by the success of the Islamist movement in capturing majority of seats in the national council of the Bar Association in 1992 the government moved cautiously to limit
the chances of a repeat victory in other professional associations (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 285). The particular electoral outcome was important on several levels. As the first professional association to be established in Egypt, the Bar Syndicate has traditionally been a highly vocal defender of liberalism and secular thought. Consequently, the success of the Brotherhood in winning more seats in this traditionally liberal entity than did the NDP and the secular opposition parties combined appeared challenging to the regime (Kassem, 2004, p. 115). In 1993 the government adopted the law on the election of the professional syndicates despite the manifest opposition of 17 of Egypt’s 23 professional associations (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 285). The new law, called the law on Guarantees of Democracy in Elections of Professional Syndicates (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 286) would only be valid if at least 50 percent of registered members voted in the first round of syndicate elections and 30 percent in the second round. If the stipulated percentage was not reached the law authorized the state to appoint board members. Moreover, according to the same law, syndicate officials were no longer authorized to organize and supervise their elections as was the case previously. However, the main obstacle of the law was the impracticality of gaining such a high voter turnout, which was intended to leave the government space to maneuver and reinforce its control over syndicates (Kassem, 2004, p. 114). In the face of government obstacles, the Muslim Brotherhood has continued its effort to participate in different syndicate elections, although on a more limited scale. It went as far as supporting government-nominated syndicate chairmen, as reflected in the 1997 and 1999 Press Syndicate elections (Kassem, 2004, p. 116).

### 5.3.3 Human rights groups

Human rights organizations have been the most controversial groups to emerge in the Mubarak era. A large part of this controversy stems from the regime’s perception of what constitutes human rights and its inability to understand attempts by civil society groups to defend them. Simply put, it is an issue in which definitions and viewpoints differ (Kassem, 2004, p. 117). The Western democratic perspective considers the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as its basic guidelines. Basic rights of people to life, liberty, security and equality, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association and religion as well as freedom from discrimination, torture and ‘inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’ (Article 5) constitute core tenets of the declaration (Monshipouri, 1995, p. 17). In this context, human rights are grounded in notions of equality and non-discrimination and all human beings deserve to be treated with equal concern and respect. While such
rights are also subject to varying interpretation depending upon individual regimes, the authoritarian perception takes the stance that political participation should function not within ‘autonomously defined public spaces’ but within ‘a state-controlled arena in which any discussion of issues must be made in codes and terms established by the rulers’. As the cases of trade unions and professional associations emphasize, the Mubarak regime has been active in the maintenance of such a view. A senior Egyptian government officials explains his view on human rights organizations as follows “Human rights means having the right to pray, the right to your religion, the freedom of work, the freedom of movement...How can [human rights] organizations get involved with the politics of the state and say there is freedom or no freedom? This is none of their business” (Kassem, 2004, p. 118).

The continuous renewal of emergency law in Egypt is most indicative of the government’s perceptions of human rights. The ban of most forms of political participation, such as gathering of individuals and the distribution of political material without prior state security authorization indicates that emergency rule is used not simply to contain suspected extremist activities, but also to control legitimate political activities (Kassem, 2004, p. 118).

5.4 Conclusion
The examples of trade unions, professional associations and human rights groups illustrate the consistency of the repression and control strategies in Egypt over the past fifty years. While presidents and policies have changed the exclusionary and repressive tactics over civil society established by Nasser have been preserved by both his successors. Political and economic policies have changed and society has diversified as different groups, opinions and demands have emerged. The repressive tactics of the present government reflect its unwillingness to accept this very real situation (Kassem, 2004, p. 126). Hosni Mubarak’s government has decided to maintain the control over civil society, mostly codified in law, which he had inherited from his predecessors (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 282). However, at the beginning of his presidency, Mubarak, were willing to allow political parties, professional associations and other groups a considerable measure of autonomy in running their own affairs and expressing their member’s views. In fact, his first term in office (1981-1987) and most of his second term was marked by this willingness to accommodate opposition groups within legal framework if political action. But this has been gradually reversed since 1992, when the Islamist appeared on the political scene (Al-Sayyid, 1995, p. 284).
The present government’s authoritarian policies have not only held back the emergence of autonomous groupings and organizations, but also created abnormal and unpredictable patterns of behaviour within civil society. The increase in labour strikes and riots over the past decades reflects the despair of the Egyptian labour force with its own trade unions and formal channels of communication. The desperation of opposition parties and groupings within the political arena has led to their acceptance of professional associations as alternative ways of political participation. The refusal of the government to recognize human rights groups has rendered them criminal in the eyes of the law and isolated them from the same society they work to defend. While this is a small price to pay for a system intent on maintaining its political domination on power the consequences of such repressive tactics is also reflected by the Islamist forces, that is largely a product of the system’s repressive policies (Kassem, 2004, p. 126).

The subsequent chapter will examine the relation between civil society organizations and the Egyptian state and what affects and makes it possible for NGOs to be active in Egypt.
6 NGOs in Egypt

In Arabic there is a major difference in the terminology between associations and societies (Sullivan, 1994, p. 14). *Jam'iyyat* is the term used to refer to associations, private voluntary organisations (PVOs) or NGOs. In contrast, *jama'at* is the term referring to societies, in particular religious, ‘fundamentalists’, or even extremist groups. Therefore, research on Islamic PVOs is concerned with *jam'iyyat islamiyya* whereas research on Islamic extremist or fundamentalist societies deals with *jama'at islamiyya* (Sullivan, 1994, p. 15). Use of the terms “private voluntary organisations” and “non-governmental organisations” to describe charitable, development, non-profit and other organisations is done with some scepticism in Egypt. Nearly all participants in and observers of NGO activity in Egypt recognize that these organisations are far from being independent of the government, and many in fact are government creations. This situation is barely unique to Egypt. NGOs are established in many developing countries by governments themselves or by official of those governments. Still, the relationship between NGOs and the state can be uncertain and conflictual as much as it can be co-operative or even co-optative (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 25). “NGOs are often distrustful and critical of governments and wary of forging close contacts. These sentiments are often reciprocated…However, NGOs comprise a broad spectrum and such a generalization is dangerous” (Sullivan, 1994, p. 15). There are several examples from Egypt about this distrustful and conflictual nature of state-NGOs relations. One of the more prominent cases over government control over non-government activities is the 1991 disbanding of the Arab Women’s Solidarity Association (AWSA) led by Dr. Nawal el-Saadawi. The Egyptian government closed down this NGO more as a reaction against Dr. el-Saadawi’s criticisms of President Mubarak’s policies than any violation of “NGO” etiquette. The government took AWSA’s assets and gave them to a government-oriented NGO, Women of Islam, a group run by a government official (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p 25).

Moreover, the NGO sector in Egypt is very large, with approximately 15 000 NGOs. They are predominantly small community-based organisations that concentrate on service delivery and social assistance. The last decade has seen a rise in ‘advocacy’ NGOs with the expectation that they would push forward on social and political change in a way that weak political parties and professional syndicates and unions suffering from government interference, however they had limited impact (Ibrahim, Lachant and Nahas, 2003, p. 10). The Egyptians have always valued the NGOs, as a separate sector of civil society, because
they are the vehicles that carry their charity in-kind donations and volunteering efforts through people to people assistance in a very participatory manner. Additionally, the NGOs are dedicated development practitioners who often achieve in more complicated situations especially in respect to vulnerable groups than most of actions of the state, unions and employers associations. Furthermore, part of these NGOs e.g. advocacy associations are dedicated to supervise and influence government, private sector and public opinion with the aim of giving more priority and support to some matters and concerns (Eliesh, 2004, p. 6). The Unavailability of data on various types of the NGO sector in Egypt makes it difficult to map these organisations and their distribution across different sectors and region. Matters are further complicated by the inaccuracy of some of the data that are available and the fact that some figures tend to mispresent the actual situation of NGOs (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 121).

There are many overlapping criteria for classifying NGOs in Egypt, because of their varying goals and aims. Law 32 of 1964 regulates the role of NGOs and characterizes the sphere of work, the description of their status as non-profit organisations and their independence from government. Despite a diversity of NGOs definition, there has been a consensus among the Egyptian intellectuals to consider NGOs as those organisations that have the following characteristics:

1. Being independent from any central and local forms of governmental control;
2. Being completely non-profit in nature and independent from the business sector; and
3. They should provide services to all who deserve them and not only to their own members (Hussein, 2003, p. 200).

Furthermore, some literatures have classified the Egyptian NGOs into two categories, namely grassroots organizations (GROs) and grassroots support organizations (GRSO). GRSOs are defined as locally based groups that work to ameliorate and develop their own community at large or more particular categories such as women, youth or farmers. GROs include both local development associations representing the entire community, such as village councils or neighbourhood improvement associations as well as interest associations, such as women’s groups, youth or water user groups. GRSOs include membership organizations and advocacy groups such as professional associations and human rights organizations. It is worth mentioning that under this classification, three
subgroups can be identified; top-down initiated NGOs e.g. government, political parties, local citizen initiated NGOs and non-Egyptian initiated NGOs (Eliesh, 2004, p. 6).

6.1 Government interference

According to the Egypt Human Development Report for 2003, Egyptian NGOs suffer from limited capacity, capabilities and self-perception. Many are organisationally weak, financially unstable and face government interference (see “UNDP, Preface and Executive Summary”).

In Egypt, NGOs are organisations registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) and subjected to law 32 of 1964, whose work is to provide welfare or developmental services to local communities’ welfare organisations provide narrowly defined services to a specific group, such as the elderly or prisoner’s families. While community development associations (CDAs), which is a type of private voluntary organization (PVO)/NGO, aim at improving the general conditions of one specific community by providing different social and economic services, which are also defined by MOSA (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 121). CDAs are semi-governmental organizations, which are often described as appendages of the state bureaucracy. They are very dependent on MOSA for their funding and staffing. Many of them are established by MOSA and continue to function as executing agents for its projects. Their leadership is heavily drawn from the state bureaucracy, such as employees of local and village councils, co-operatives and in many cases MOSA itself (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 8).

NGOs represent the most important section of what is called Egyptian civil society. The 5000 co-operatives, 25 professional syndicates and 23 trade unions are not legally considered to be NGOs and are governed by a totally different set of laws. Interestingly, businessmen’s associations, along with advocacy organisations, such as those for human rights, women and the environment, have to register with the ministry as NGOs and stand the same laws that govern other categories of NGOs (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 121). Most of the advocacy groups in Egypt are registered as CDAs and are concentrated in Cairo. Due to the political nature of their activities, many advocacy groups, particularly those working in the fields of human rights, legal services and ‘democratization’ find themselves involved in confrontations with the state and are constantly harassed (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 8).

About 61 per cent of all NGOs are registered with and supervised by the MOSA, thus giving it control over an integral part (See “UNDP, Preface and Executive Summary”).
Civil Society in Egypt

Compulsory registration with the MOSA puts many NGOs in a client-like relationship in which they might more suitably be called Government-operated NGOs (GONGOs) (“NGOs, INGOs, GO-NGOs and DO-NGOs”, spring 2000). Laws governing their activities impede the possibilities for NGOs to develop independently and put the human rights NGOs in a special unstable legal position. In these circumstances, activities that international norms classify as the prerogative of civil society depend instead on government approval and remain permanently subject to government intervention (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 11).

In 2002 a new law for the civil foundations and associations of Egypt passed, Law 82 of 2002 (see “UNDP, Preface and Executive Summary”). The law maintains the requirement that all NGOs registered with MOSA and increases the scope of government interference. Importantly, it gives the Ministry the authority to dissolve NGOs, which previously rested with the courts. The position of NGOs is further weakened as the law allows for restrictions on their establishment, activities and funding. From a positive perspective, the new law has given the right to civil organisations to operate in all fields of activities without determining specific fields that are not included, such as the human rights activities or specific women’s activities. In other words, the new law has opened the door wide open for advocacy activities (“UNDP, Participation in Local Development and its Mechanisms”). However, others note that the ambiguous phrasing of the restrictions on NGO activities, that is, prohibiting any ‘political or unionist activity’ or anything that violates ‘public order or morals’, can be seen to offer potential for broad interpretation and misuse by the authorities. In this way human rights advocacy groups can be denied registration on the basis that their activities are political (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p.11). For instance, the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) was formed in 1985 but was denied formal authorization on the basis that its aims were political, in violation of the law governing voluntary associations (Law No 32 of 1964). In contrast, business associations formed to promote privatization were allowed under the same law. This abnormality continued into the 1990s when more human rights advocacy groups in Egypt were obliged by nature of their objectives to remain technically illegal (Sakr, 2001, p. 11).

The implications for NGO funding and participation in regional and international networks are also serious. NGOs wishing to obtain funding from foreign NGOs within Egypt or from international sources must apply to the Ministry for approval. The administrative body is also demanded to approve receipt of donations from the public,
contributing to the weighty bureaucratic procedures needed for fundamental operations. Approval from the Ministry is also required when joining an international network or agency outside Egypt. A potentially serious obstacle to the NGOs development is their increased involvement in international networks for support and information-sharing (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p.11).

6.2 Organisational weaknesses
In addition to difficulties stemming from government interference, many NGOs are further weakened from a lack of internal democracy, accountability, skilled management and sufficient funding. Egyptian NGOs work in an unstable financial situation. They are dependent on foreign funding, which is problematic for several reasons. The burden of government has already been considered. Additionally, receiving external sources of funding can damage their image by opening NGOs up to criticism from the government that they are making it easy for foreign interference. Ultimately, donors themselves are known to have short attention spans. Funding is spent in the short term making adequate and consistent long term planning difficult. There is a lack of coherence and strategy. Donors may fund week-long conferences but then not to follow up with support to take the decisions forward. NGOs in Egypt suffer many of the problems that the UNDP identifies for Arab NGOs more generally. Power is often concentrated in the hand of a single person, which is the founder of the organisation. Internal conflict and lack of democracy impedes efficient decision-making and systems of accountability are not respected. Then, poor management affects organisations’ opportunities for funding. Finally, many Egyptian advocacy NGOs have social and political elites striving for progress but have little in common with the people they aim to serve. This implies that they do not have the political support that might defend them from government manipulation, making them more dependent on outside donors and international organisations, which in turn further de-legitimise them (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p.12).

The basic struggle for survival distracts the attention of NGOs from their real goals. It also results in competition within the sector, rather than cooperation in the interests of pluralism and the development of stronger networks from which pressure for legislative change (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p.12).
6.3 Conclusion
Over the past year, the government has tightened its control over civil society institutions and restricted freedom of speech and expression. Government interference seriously restricts the autonomy of civil society actors, including NGOs, professional syndicates and individual intellectuals. This interference is both formal and subtle, it includes the bureaucratic obstacles faced by NGOs and the government appointment of senior positions at institutions such as universities or professional syndicates, including the Egyptian Journalists Syndicates. NGOs in Egypt face problems arising not only from their legal status but issues of accountability, funding and donor relationships which are complicated by the political environment. In turn, ambiguities stemming from this lack of autonomy contribute to a competition for survival and a lack of pluralism among civil society groups (Sakr, 2003, p. 9).

Egyptian NGOs, in principle and practice, still have a long way to go in order to realize their full potential. The government of Egypt seems to have an ambivalent attitude towards NGOs. On the one hand it needs them to participate as partners in the struggle against the pressing national development problems of poverty, environmental pollution, illiteracy and so forth. On the other hand, the government fears their power for such ambiguous reasons as security and sovereignty considerations (Hussein, 2003, p. 212).

Finally, it is inevitable to analyze the concept of civil society without mentioning the religious aspect. In general the religion has had a great importance for the formation of civil societies around the globe. Therefore next chapter will address the relation between religion and civil society in Egypt from a historical perspective.
7 Religion and Civil Society

Civil society has become a significant issue in Islamic politics in recent years and a central topic of discourse for scholars, policy makers and other observers (Hashmi, 2002, p. 38). Egypt enjoys an Islamic homogeneity in that approximately 90 percent of the seventy millions Egyptians are Sunni Muslim, there is a small minority of Shi'i Muslims and 7-10 percent of the population is Coptic Christian. Still, this homogenous Sunni population is diverse in its approach to politics (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 19). Islam is far from a monolithic movement in Egypt. Egypt's Sunni Muslims find a variety of philosophies, theologies and partisan groups with which to identify and/or associate as the members of this population express their political and religious beliefs (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 21).

The existing phenomenon of Islamist activism in Egypt should be seen in historical perspective. Contemporary Egypt differs a lot from early twentieth-century Egypt with an excess of institutions and trends now pervading the society. State-sponsored Islam and state control of Islam in the early and mid-twentieth century are significant aspects to understand as we witness the clash between state and society in Egypt. In the 1950s and beyond, President Nasser sought to transform Egypt into a modern and secular society. Mainly successful in dismantling the power of Ulama, the religious-scholarly elite, Nasser could not destroy the power of either Islam or Coptic Christianity, the two dominant religious forces in Egypt then as now (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 19-20). In the early 1970s, when socialism was the reigning ideology because of President Nasser, a new president found himself in conflict with this trend. President Sadat, Nasser's predecessor, was a devout Muslim manipulated Islam for his own political purposes. Seeing himself as the 'believer president', Sadat used television and other media to improve his religious image in an attempt at building political legitimacy by contrasting himself to his predecessor. Sadat used Islam to legitimate key government actions and policies and to criticize as extremism the increasing challenges to the regime by Islamic activists during the late seventies (Esposito, 1991, p. 94). When the current President Hosni Mubarak succeeded Sadat as president in 1981, he continued openness towards the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic group noted for its non-violent and cooperative approach, while cracking down on militancy (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 21). This legitimized the Muslim Brotherhood and allowed it to resurface and to promote openly its political and economic agendas.
The Muslim Brotherhood has long been involved in national politics and social welfare in Egypt. The group is, in fact, both a political movement and a social welfare agency and is the single most important opposition group to Mubarak’s ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 22). There is no single Islamist group or movement in Egypt that represents the entire society, however, the Muslim Brotherhood is more popular than other groups (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 1). The Muslim Brotherhood has been very active in promoting social welfare, mainly in the areas of health care and education. The organization and its supporters run schools, hospitals, day care programs, job training centres, tutoring programs, Quranic instruction programs, and numerous other development and social programs. Its members also are very much involved in capitalist enterprises, such as factories, investment companies and agriculture enterprises (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 22).

7.1 Islamic associations

The Islamist groups, whether Brotherhood-affiliated or otherwise, that provide for the needs of local communities are often mosque-based NGOs. These groups recognize the problems society faces and do something about them. Islamist groups, along with thousands of Christian and secular NGOs are doing for their societies what the government has long promised but has not fulfilled. They have developed efficient social services, particularly schools, trade skills centres, day care and health-care centres and hospitals out of frustration with the government’s inability to recognize the needs of specific communities and to target these communities with development projects in response to those needs (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 24). Voluntarism, *tatawwiyya* (including that of an Islamic nature) has a long history and solid reputation in Egypt. Islamic associations originated on the nineteenth century, were legitimized with the successes of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Young Men’s Muslim Association, had a rapid growth after the second World War and in the late 1950s and began to be transformed in the Nasser era as the government sought an increasing role in the daily private lives of its subjects. Yet with the failure of government to efficiently or effectively displace private initiatives, there has been a gradual reassertion of voluntarism and ‘self-help’ in Egypt that is directed toward poor and impoverished communities. This voluntaristic impulse has developed over the past century from a mainly elitist sense of noblesse oblige to a more middle-class willingness to help communities in need (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 24).
7.2 **Islamic NGOs**

Private Islamic associations are evident throughout Egypt. They range from small organizations of five people or so operating out of satellite villages to large societies (even corporations) employing health care professionals, educators and clerical personnel. In general, these Islamic NGOs are *jam‘iyat khariyya*, or charitable associations that are registered by MOSA (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 26). It is difficult to give an exact number of Islamic NGOs working in Egypt today. Islamic NGOs are usually registered as ‘religious’ NGOs, a category which also includes Coptic NGOs. Religious associations are part of a larger category of scientific-religious-cultural NGOs. Some argue that this category was introduced by MOSA in order to mask the growing numbers of Islamic NGOs and underplay their importance. On the other hand, many register as CDAs in order to avoid harassment by MOSA and other state officials. The activities of Islamic NGOs are heavily scrutinized by state authorities because of their possible association with larger organizations whose aim is to create an Islamic society ruled by an Islamic state (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 7). As with Islam in general, the overabundance of Islamic NGOs is by nature far from monolithic or homogenous. Some NGOs are GONGOs, some amount to Islamic corporations, some are state-supported but privately run CDAs and some avoid any reliance on government support and are the more entrepreneurial (Sullivan and Abed-Kotob, 1999, p. 27). Islamic NGOs are known to be most active and well-organized of all NGOs. Their wide popular base, access to resources and ability to recruit large numbers of people set them apart from the others. Another characteristic of these NGOs is their relative autonomy from the state and Western donor agencies. Most Islamic NGOs obtain funding from individuals, international Islamic NGOs or governments from Islamic countries (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 7).

7.3 **Coptic NGOs**

Information about Coptic NGOs is not always easy to collect from official statistics. Coptic NGOs include some of the largest, most professional and rich NGOs in the country. Many Coptic NGOs receive sizeable funds from Western governments and other donor agencies, as well as from individuals inside the country and the large Coptic communities abroad. Their religious identity and substantial financial base enable them to recruit many Coptic professional staff and volunteers as they feel it is their religious duty to assist the poor. Large NGOs represent only a small proportion of the total Coptic NGOs,
the majority are small organizations working in local communities (Abdelrahman, 2004, p. 7-8).

7.4 Conclusion
In the theoretical part of the essay, the relation between civil society and religion was mentioned as important when analyzing countries. As the case of Egypt illustrates, the religion is of great significance and must therefore be addressed when analyzing the Egyptian civil society. Religion and civil society are intertwined and Islam remains an inherent part of Egypt’s social and political sphere. The following chapter provides a description of the media environment and role in Egypt which is important in order to make a media analysis.
8 The media environment

Egypt has some of the oldest newspapers in the world and its press is one of the most influential and widely read in the region (Smalley, 2005, p. 14). The country has some of the well-known writers and commentators in the Middle East and newspapers columnists often criticize government officials and policies (See “Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)”, 2002). In fact, the Egyptian press remains one of the leading and most widely read in the region and citizens are in general able to speak their views on a wide range of political and social issues (See “International Journalists’ Network (IJNet)”, 2002).

But Egyptian media also operate under a number of formal restrictions. Journalists often censor themselves on certain sensitive issues, mainly avoiding direct criticism of the president and his family, the army, security forces and human rights abuses. Although the Egyptian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and speech, in practice there is an important censorship problem (See “International Journalists’ Network (IJNet)”, 2002). Indeed the media in Egypt are severely regulated by a combination of structural arrangements, whereby the government controls the press and broadcasting and legal controls prevent journalists from reporting freely on sensitive domestic issues or deviating from official foreign policy when reporting on international affairs (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p.3).

8.1 Emergency law

Any discussion of civil society and media, dependent as it is on basic freedoms of expression and association must address Egypt's emergency law. Egypt has been governed under a state of emergency since 1981 and a semi-permanent state of emergency has been in effect almost continuously since 1967 (See “Human Rights Watch”, 2002, p. 8). The emergency law has been renewed every three years, however, most recently in April 2006 the parliament decided to extend Egypt's state of emergency for another two years (See “CountryWatch”). The law gives the government extensive powers to limit fundamental freedoms overriding the guarantees contained in the Constitution. These include:

- arresting suspects at will and detaining them without trial for prolonged periods;
- referring civilians to military or exceptional state security courts whose procedures fall far short of international standards for fair trial;
- prohibiting strikes, demonstrations and public meetings,
and censoring or closing down newspapers in the name of national security (See “Human Rights Watch”, 2003).

The emergency law, which violates both Egypt’s Constitution and its international human rights obligations, has facilitated an environment where the authorities abuse basic human rights on a wide scale and with impunity (See “Human Rights Watch”, 2002, p. 8). Furthermore, the law gives the state extensive powers to limit freedoms of assembly and peaceful demonstration, which are guaranteed in the Egyptian Constitution. The Gathering Law requires the police to be informed before any public gathering and gives them the right to prevent meetings from taking place, using force if necessary (See “EOHR”, 2003). The continuous renewal of emergency rule provides the government with the legal right to control every level of political activity, including that within the confines of the formally defined political arena. The government is entitled, for instance, to censor activities including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. As one report explains, emergency laws allow the government “the right to censor, seize or confiscate letters, newspapers, newsletters, before they are published” (Kassem, 2004, p. 55).

Significantly, defamation is a criminal matter, punishable by imprisonment and potentially brought to trial in secret security courts. The law gives the President broad powers to arrest those considered a danger to national security and permits the trial of civilians in military or state security courts. Certainly it was the application of the emergency law which was used in 2000 to arrest Saadeddin Ibrahim, director of the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies and one of the most eminent civil society figures in Egypt calling for political reform and electoral monitoring (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 10).

This is not to suggest that there is not a lot of healthy debate in Egypt. However, there is informal self-censorship with the understanding that certain issues are simply not discussed. For instance, although “Senior government officials are often criticized in public and in the newspapers in Egypt… President Hosni Mubarak and his decisions remain virtually sacrosanct” (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 10). Indeed many believe that Saadeddin Ibrahim was arrested in some part for comments he made on the television concerning issues of succession in Egypt. Obviously this environment is a serious impediment to the development of civil society, particularly advocacy work. The emergency law impacts the work and personal safety of journalists, intellectuals and human rights advocates by giving the government scope for silencing critics in the name of national security (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 10).
8.2 The constitution

The present Constitution was adopted in 1971 and includes numerous sections supporting freedom of expression and forbidding censorship of the press. According to article 47, every individual is given the right to express his/her opinion and to publicize it verbally, in writing or by other means of expression within the limit of the law (See “Arab Republic of Egypt, The People’s Assembly”). The Constitution contains a vision of the role of press and in article 207 it says as follows:

“The press shall exercise its true vocation freely and independently in the service of society through the different means of expression. It shall interpret the trend of public opinion … the safeguard of the liberties, rights and public duties and respect the sanctity of the private lives of citizens, as stipulated in the Constitution and defined by law” (See ”Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR)”, 2003).

Furthermore, freedom of the press, printing, publication, and mass media is guaranteed under article 48 and censorship on newspapers is prohibited in normal circumstances (See “Arab Republic of Egypt, The People’s Assembly”). However, the second section of the article provides for ‘limited’ censorship on newspapers and mass media in matters relating to public safety or national security during a state of emergency or war. This section has been used by the government to justify official censorship. Egypt has officially been in a state of Emergency since the assassination of former President Anwar El Sadat in October 1981. The Emergency Law is used by the government to intrude on constitutional guarantees of citizen’s rights. This law gives the state authority broad powers of censorship under the pretext of protecting the so-called ‘public order’. For example, it can censor newspapers, newsletters and confiscate publications and shut down publishing houses (See ”EOHR”, 2003). The law also allows authorities to try journalists and others in state security courts and military-style tribunals whose decision cannot be appealed (See ”IJNet”, 2002).

The constitution restricts ownership of newspapers to public or private legal entities, corporate bodies and political parties and any individual may only own 10 per cent of a newspaper (Smalley, 2005, p. 14). In 2001, the Supreme Constitutional Court ruled against a 1998 law that requires newspapers managed by joint stock companies to obtain the approval of the Prime Minister prior to publishing. Due to the government restrictions, a
joint stock is the only possible incorporation option for publishers (See "US Department of State", 2002).

### 8.3 Media legislation

The Penal Code, Press Law and Publications Law are the main parts of legislation that used to govern Egyptian media. The Penal Code stipulates fines and/or imprisonment for criticizing the President, members of the government and foreign heads of state. The Press and Publications Law are both intended to provide protection against mean or unconfirmed reporting, but have been used to charge journalists with insult or defamation. In recent years, the media laws have undergone several changes. One of the most important changes on the Egyptian media scene over the past ten years has been the new Press Law in 1995. In order to silence critics, the government took draconian measures against free reporting and passed the new Press Law. The law permitted detention of journalists pending criminal investigations for breaking censorship laws, together with a stiffening of the fines and prison sentences imposed for spreading ‘false news’, deemed harmful to the state, public officials or the economy. This law provoked a huge public outcry and was slightly softened before being stipulated (Sakr, 2001, p. 9). The Press Law of 1996 prescribes a one-year prison sentence for offence or two years if a public official files the suit. Journalists also face imprisonment under other, broader Penal Code provisions, such as those prohibiting ‘the violation of public morality’ and ‘damaging national interest’ (See “CPJ”, 2001). Opposition party newspapers have within limits published articles critical of the President and foreign heads of state without being charged or harassed. The Government continues to charge journalists with libel (See "US Department of State, 2002).

In 1997, the Supreme Constitutional Court declared article 195 of the Penal Code unconstitutional under which an editor could have been regarded as criminally responsible for defamation contained in any portion of the newspaper. The Court decided that the correct standard of responsibility should be ‘negligence’. The courts have consequently applied this lesser standard (See “US Department of State, 2002).

In 2001, the government officials tried to tighten the country’s already strict press law. The Minister of Culture sent a bill to Parliament in an attempt to amend the Public Record Law. Had the amendment been incorporated into the law, it would have imposed a five-year prison sentence and a £E 10,000 fine for publishing or photocopying a government
document without prior written consent from the Cabinet. The amendment was not passed, however, the threat of implementing these new restrictions remains. Such a vague and wide-ranging law could stop the debate on any issue and could potentially give the state freedom to define what constitutes a government document (See “CPJ”, 2001).

8.4 Censorship
Naomi Sakr indicates in *Civil Society, Media and Accountability in the Arab Region*, that it is important to recognize that censorship is achieved not only through direct suppression of content but also by more essential and less visible means, including regulation of media ownership, regulation of entry to the journalistic profession and regulation of printing and distribution, as well as judicial attacks on media practitioners and bans on access to information. Even though the Egyptian government may claim that the country has a ‘free press’, because opposition parties are allowed to publish newspapers alongside government-owned dailies, analysis of the Egyptian media laws reveals that the media is not free (Sakr, 2001, p. 8). Despite the fact that the constitutional high court recognized in 1993 the right to criticize public officials as one of the conditions of a democratic system and article 4 of the 1996 Press Law prohibits censorship, the government’s pressure on journalists is incessant (See “Reporters sans Frontiers (RSF)”, 2002). There are three different ministries with censorship personnel within the Egyptian government. The Ministry of the Interior has the right to prevent specific issues of foreign-published newspapers from entering the country on the basis of protecting the public order. The Ministry of Defence can ban works about sensitive security issues and the Council of Ministers can ban works that is deemed offensive to public morals, harmful to religion or likely to cause a breach of peace (See “US Department of State, 2002).

Journalists cannot choose which union to belong to. By law, if they are not full members of the one and only Egyptian Journalists Syndicate, they may not work as journalists or be hired by any publisher or news agency (Sakr, 2001, p. 8). The regime’s direct involvement in selecting the chair of the Syndicate and manipulating syndicate elections gives it an additional means of keeping reporters in line. In general, the informal obstacles to reform are very subtle and extensive. Newspapers are run under tight control of the editor who may have an interest in maintaining the status quo, for instance discouraging journalists from joining training programs (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 6).
8.5 Print media

In this subchapter general information about Egyptian print media and particular information is on the chosen newspapers; Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd is given.

Editorial and opinion pages of the leading daily papers are widely read in the Arab region for the coverage of regional issues and on local level newspapers cover a variety of topics. There are 14 state-owned newspapers, including the three leading daily newspapers: *Al-Ahram* (The Pyramids), *Al-Akhbar* (The News) and *Al-Gomhuriya* (The Republic). These newspapers are often described as ‘semi-official’. The government owns stock in them and the president appoints the editor in chief for the state-controlled papers and they mainly follow the government line, although criticizing government policies occasionally (See “IJNet”, 2002). The oldest newspaper in Egypt and the entire Arab world is Al-Ahram, which first published in 1876 (Smalley, 2005, p. 14). Al-Ahram is the largest newspaper in Egypt and also the largest Arabic paper in the world with Middle East, international and North America editions. Its circulation is nearly 1 million copies. Al-Ahram is also distributed across the country and throughout the Middle East. Al-Gomhuriya receives national distribution. Four of the 14 papers are published in English or French and the remaining 10 are published in Arabic. Two of the 14 are evening newspapers and nine are weeklies. There are 38 state-owned magazines and periodicals (See “World Press Trends 2004”, p. 133).

The five major opposition newspapers act each as representative of a particular political party and most of them are weeklies, except *Al-Wafd* and *Al-Ahrar*. Both have lower daily circulation compared to the government dailies (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 6). Al-Wafd is an organ for the New Wafd party and its circulation is about 360,000 copies (See “Landguiden”). The opposition newspapers often publish criticism of government and provide larger coverage of human rights abuses than state-run newspapers. Opposition political parties publish their own newspapers but receive direct government subsidy and, in some cases, from foreign interests as well (See “CPJ”, 2001). The Islamist-oriented socialist Labour Party has not been permitted to publish its newspaper *Al-Sha'b* (The People) more than twice a week (See “World Press Trends 2005”, p. 282). Additionally, the government holds a monopoly over the printing and distribution of newspapers, including those of the opposition parties. The government used to control the output of the newsprint to certain publications (See US Department of State, 2002).
The government severely controls the newspaper licensing process and restrictions make it very complicated for private-owned newspapers to acquire licenses. For this reason, several independent publishers have registered their papers and magazines as foreign publications in Lebanon, Cyprus and Greece and print them inside Egypt in the ‘Free Media Zone’ (where entry and exit of goods is government controlled) or abroad (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 6). These publications are subject to review by the Foreign Publications Censor, who reports directly to the Minister of Information and can ban publications deemed to contain offensive material (See “CPJ”, 2001). Many topics are taboo, such as the relations between Copt and Moslems, the spread of terrorist doctrines, the issue of human rights abuses, criticism of the president and his family, the presentation of modern interpretations of Islam etc (See “RSF”, 2002). In order to avoid censorship and financial loss from suspensions, some papers have informal arrangements with the censors, who agree to review publications before printing (See “CPJ”, 2002). For instance, the Middle East Times, which has never been given a license to publish in Egypt, currently submits a proof of each issue to the censor in advance, and then omitting any article which causes problems but making sure that the issue is safely distributed and that sales and advertising revenues are protected. Another privately-owned foreign weekly published in English and aimed at the Egyptian market is the Cairo Times, launched in 1997 and aimed at a rich business audience across the region. Other English-language newspapers include Ahram weekly and Egyptian Gazette, which have limited circulation and keep within set limits in terms of content (Ibrahim et al., 2003, p. 7).

In 2004, though, journalists said that some editorials and opinion pieces openly questioned Mubarak's policies, even in daily newspapers such as Al-Ahram (The Pyramids), whose editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Nafie, is a Mubarak appointee and ally. Opposition dailies and weeklies, taking their cue from these semi-official dailies, were emboldened to criticize Mubarak as well. Most of the Egyptian publications openly discussed the political future of Gamal Mubarak, the president's son, who some believe is being groomed to succeed his father. Several newspapers published pointed criticisms of the younger Mubarak, a marked change from only a year before, when very few covered Gamal Mubarak's political future, a sensitive topic (See ”CPJ”, 2004).

Next chapter provides a background to important political events that occurred in Egypt in 2005 in order to understand the results of the two Egyptian newspapers that has been analyzed.
9 Political events 2005

In February 2005, President Mubarak proposed an amendment to article 76 of the constitution that would allow, for the first time, multi-candidate presidential elections. A referendum was held on May 25, 2005, as required by the constitution, and the amendment was approved (reportedly, with a majority of over 82 per cent support). However, the terms of the newly adopted amendment make it very difficult, if not impossible, for candidates other than those of Mubarak's NDP, which holds about 90 per cent of parliament seats, to run for the elections. The obstacles include requiring aspiring presidential candidates to first secure the support of 250 elected officials (including 140 local council members, 65 People's Assembly deputies, and 25 members of the Shura Council, which is the 264-member upper house of Parliament), and requiring that the parties they represent to have existed for at least five years. In the event, the referendum was boycotted by some of Egypt's leading opposition parties, including the Wafd party (See “Wikipedia, Politics of Egypt”).

The presidential election campaign kicked off on August 17, 2005 and lasted until September 4, 2005. Under the election law, parties that proposed candidates for the election were reviewed by the Presidential Election Commission. Only 10 out of 30 proposed candidates were allowed to participate in the presidential election by the Presidential Election Commission. One prominent candidate not allowed to run was Taalat Sadat, the nephew of former President Anwar Sadat, who appealed his disqualification unsuccessfully. Egypt's largest Islamic group, the Muslim Brotherhood, was not permitted to field a candidate for the election because the organization is banned by the government, which prohibits political parties with a stated religious agenda. The Brotherhood has not backed any of the other candidates, but they encouraged Egyptians to go to the polls and vote for anyone other than Mubarak (See “Wikipedia, Egyptian Presidential Election, 2005”).

The presidential election of 2005 was held on September 7, 2005. It was the first-ever multi-party election in Egypt’s history and it was overseen by Egyptian judges. No international monitors were allowed to oversee the election (“Guide to Egypt's election”, 05-09-02). Ten parties were set to take part and the leading candidates were Hosni Mubarak of the National Democratic Party, Numan Gumaa of the New Wafd Party and Ayman Nour of the Tomorrow (Ghad) Party. Even though the New Wafd Party and the Tomorrow (Ghad) Party had opposed the May 2005 constitutional referendum, their
respective candidates contested the election. Finally, on September 27, 2005 Mubarak was sworn in for his new term (See “Wikipedia, Egyptian Presidential Election, 2005”). According to a late August report by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), media coverage was biased in favour of Hosni Mubarak. While print media provided more balanced coverage than television channels, "the majority of newspapers have dedicated themselves to supporting [Mubarak], and sometimes, to challenging his main competitors", says CIHRS. However, several independent newspapers, including "El-Masri El-Youm" and "Nahdet Masr", provided "excellent service both at the level of information and analysis", CIHRS noted (See “IFEX, Election coverage favours Mubarak: CIHRS”, 05-09-06).

Two months after the first multi-candidate presidential elections the Egyptian parliamentary elections of 2005 was held. The election process started in November and ended in December, 2005. Although the ruling NDP maintained its majority and control of the Assembly, large gains were made by the opposition at the expense of the NDP. The main concern during the election was not on certain electoral programs or campaigns but rather on how much the opposition will gain which contributes to more reform in the future and pave the way for more balance of power in the Egyptian politics (See “Wikipedia, The Egyptian Parliamentary Election, 2005”).
10 Analysis of the newspapers

This chapter will analyze the results from the newspapers. The results clearly reflect the important political events that occurred in Egypt in 2005. The newspapers are dominated by the presidential, parliamentary elections, changes in the constitution and in other laws concerning political parties, elections, freedom of expression and journalists’ right to publish et cetera. As described in the method, the occurrence of descriptions of civil society in Al-Wafd and Al-Ahram has been looked for. The following questions were asked in the study of the newspapers; who has said?, what was said?, what are the consequences?

Starting with Al-Wafd, which is the opposition newspaper, the dominating discussion concerning civil society concerns an urge from different civil society actors to change and correct the constitution and other laws making them more democratic. Several items demonstrate this protest, Al-Wafd states “that the decision on the laws concerning the political parties is contrary to the constitution and limits the number of political parties” (Item 53 (p. 5). The opposition parties Al-Wafd, Al Tagammu, Nasserite party, agree on the necessity to change some laws in the constitution to make them more democratic and to give the political parties more freedom without any state intervention (Item 1 (p. 1). The discussion about the elections has pervaded the newspapers before the presidential election campaign that started in Aug 2005 and the parliamentary election in November. These articles illustrate this discussion; “Judges and politicians demand pure election before starting to nominate candidates for the election” (Item 18 (p. 1). “Experts from the government and the opposition parties will scrutinize and correct the paragraphs in the presidential election laws and encourage people to engage in this matter instead of being abstainers” (Item 7 (p. 11). Criticism of the elections comes from different actors such as the Constitutional court that declares the seven articles in the laws concerning the presidential elections invalid (Item 31 (p. 3). A person writes that “the presidential elections are not constitutional” (Item 21 (p. 1). Al-Wafd claims that the government has missed the chance to change the laws that control the parliamentary elections (Item 22 (p. 3). However, some changes have been made for the forthcoming elections where the human rights commission and 22 NGOs will supervise the coming elections (Item 58 (p. 1). This is a progress for the Egyptian civil society.

The protests against the government are mainly about political freedom and democracy. For instance, Doctor Sarwat Badawi who knows about the constitution discusses together with Al-Wafd “that the political life in Egypt is being slowly but surely destroyed. The law concerning the political parties and the Parliament (People’s Assembly and Shura Council) are in line with the
government” (Item 36 (p. 3). Several actors criticise openly the president, among them are Al-Wafd that “criticizes the president and his power” (Item 51 (p. 3) and journalists write that “during 25 years under the power of Mubarak, the vice president has not been important and in 24 years the constitution has not been followed” (Item 20 (p. 3).

Also, the former chief of Al-Ahram criticizes the president and that he has held power for long time (Item 11 (p. 5). In a letter to the editor, Dr. Amira writes that “ordinary Egyptian citizens have nothing to say and it has been like this since long time” (Item 71 (p. 7). A famous Egyptian actor refuses recording a TV series about Mubarak’s time in power. He states that “an important part of democracy is to let the Egyptian people themselves choose their president” (Item 64 (p. 11). Another famous Egyptian person, the director and critic, Osama Anwar Okasha, writes “that a party’s crisis is also the state’s crisis. The principle: “let them talk and close your ears” is applied by the persons in authority” (Item 54 (p. 11, 14).

The political parties play an important role in this discussion and they try to engage the Egyptian people and make them aware of the political situation in the country. Here comes an example where several political parties arrange a conference with the “intention to give people freedom to express their opinions, discuss the cancellation of the Emergency laws and to get a more democratic government, that is, to give other political parties than the NDP more mandates in the government “ (Item 68 (p. 9). Other civil society organisations are also engaged, for instance Dr. Nabil Helmi Amin, the president of a human rights organisation called Jamiat al Ansar and former minister Adel Abd el Baki who has the main responsibility arrange a discussion forum where the new laws are being discussed in order to ameliorate the political situation in Egypt (Item 4 (p. 2). There are examples when the government has met the political parties’ demands and protests, for instance, Al-Wafd should have demonstrated for the changes of the laws concerning the political parties but cancelled the demonstration because the government agreed on Al-Wafd’s conditions (Item 17 (p. 1). Another time Al-Wafd wanted to cancel article 17 of the law and the parliament promised to make changes in the law concerning the political parties (Item 8 (p. 1). As noticed, the political parties are important actors within civil society. They make their voices heard and criticize the government and try to change the laws to give the people and political parties more freedom and political rights. Other civil society organisations are mentioned such as; a medical association arranges a conference with the theme drugs (Item 14 (p. 11) and “an agricultural cooperative helps the peasants to fight cotton larvae with insecticide, however, it does not always help and the solution is sometimes to pick them by hand” (Item 23 (p. 6). Here, the organisation Development
of Society disbanded since it failed to follow the law conditions (Item 35 (p. 2). Private companies help building houses” (Item 63 (p. 7) and “Al-Wafd hospital gives 45 wheelchairs and three tricycles to disabled persons” (Item 56 (p. 1). Only one article in Al-Wafd mentions anything about religious organisations or associations and that is about the Muslim brotherhood who “is between demonstration and coalition with other political parties” (Item 67 (p. 6). Two articles about bribes within civil society organisations were found, the first one is a member of the municipal union in Beni Suef who states that the new bakeries are bribes for the local elections (Item 44 (p. 9), in the second article it says that cooperatives belonging to the government take bribes (Item 45 (p. 9).

Another subject of importance is about the journalists’ situation. In one of the articles, a journalist criticizes the president and the laws that have been adopted against the journalists’ rights and freedom (Item 40 (last page). In another article, journalists accuse the government and the authorities of “detesting them and ignoring their rights”. They also claim that “the president does not keep his promises, that is, not to imprison a journalist for publication” (Item 48 (p. 1). A media person writes an article about NDP and its great power over media and when there are elections the control is even greater over the media. Al-Wafd wants to make use of their political rights but is constantly hindered (Item 33 (p. 5). When reading through all articles in Al-Wafd, it seems like demonstrations among the journalists are quite frequent. Here, journalists demonstrate against article 76 of the law. They stood outside the Union of Journalists and the police hit them. The journalists have complained but nothing has happened yet (Item 10 (p. 3). Another demonstration is outside the People’s Assembly. The journalists demonstrate against the law saying that the “one who publishes anything against the government shall be imprisoned”. The demonstration is a protest against the president who has promised not to take any measures against journalists who writes against the government (Item 41 (p. 1). This demonstration is also a protest against imprisonment due to publication. The demonstration is addressed to the parliament and the government (Item 19 (p. 1).

In many articles in Al-Wafd, the legislative and the judicial branch criticize the constitution and their own activities. For instance, a member of the Shura Council (Majlis Al-Shura) is against article 6 that is contrary to parliamentary laws. “The law says that when the president of the Shura Council holds a speech, he is not supposed to talk on the president’s behalf but from the parliament’s behalf” (Item 13 (p. 6). The president of the parliament admits “that those who listen to the government get lost. The parliament should actually supervise the executive power, however, this
is not the case in Egypt and this has brought negative consequences to the country” (Item 37 (p. 3). A member of the parliament accuses the parliament for instituting incorrect laws (Item 25 (p.7). The same has been noticed by the Constitutional court that has discovered cheating among those who institute laws (Item 28 (p. 1). The Judge’s club claims that the laws are not good for the people (Item 43 (p. 3). There are examples when a discussion or a protest has contributed to positive consequences; the Shura Council has brought up the discussion about the political laws and this has contributed to that a higher electoral committee will limit the abuse of people’s political rights (Item 3 (p. 2).

Like Al-Wafd, the dominating discussions in Al-Ahram, which is the state controlled newspaper, are about the elections, amendments in different laws and democracy. The presidential election is the burning subject since there are only few months before the election. The following articles write about whether the election laws are in accordance with the constitution; the Supreme Constitutional Court “starts to examine the presidential elections laws to see if these laws are in accordance with the Constitution. Previously, the Supreme Constitutional Court did not examine the laws before implementing them” (Item 3 (p. 1). Further, the People’s Assembly (Majlis Al-Sha’ab) agrees at the beginning to correct the presidential election law, which the Supreme Constitutional Court has accepted. The laws give the presidential candidates the right to publish their election program in the newspapers (Item 15 (p.1). “The People’s Assembly shall follow the laws according to the decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court and adjust the presidential election laws” (Item 19 (p. 32). Also, this article mentions that the People’s Assembly approves to correct the presidential laws in the constitutional laws (Item 21 (p. 1, 8). Support to the government has been found in some of the articles; “Mubarak signs the four changes in the presidential elections laws which are in accordance with the constitution” (Item 35 (p. 1). In this article, Safwat El Sherif of NDP and Dr. Fathi Soror president of the Shura Council, agree to found a new law that will regulate the presidential elections. From the beginning this initiative came from the political parties expressing their will in the parliament to have this new law (Item 23 (p. 7). A top journalist “writes that after Mubarak has corrected article 76 in the constitution, (has to do with the presidential election), there are continuous steps towards changes” (Item 22 (p. 3). Finally, the government says “that it does not want to struggle against the opposition parties and avoids to hurt its competitors and to deceive the voters” (Item 49 (p. 34).

Various actors are involved in the supervision of the presidential elections. One civil society actor, the Egyptian human rights commission, is obvious in this discussion. “The
human rights commission and UN people will examine whether the presidential elections follow the human rights. They will also examine if the human rights perspective is taken into consideration in the presidential elections laws” (Item 46 (p. 14). Moreover, the Egyptian Human rights commission has done a cooperation program between them and the electoral commission that will supervise the presidential elections (Item 69 (p. 14). In this article, the constitutional committee within the Shura Council agreed to “give the electoral committee more possibilities to supervise the elections” (Item 6 (p. 14). Furthermore, the government "has found a special committee for the electoral campaign of the parliamentary and presidential elections” (Item 64 (p.14). The department of justice prepares a program that contains rules in detail how the elections should proceed (Item 71 (p. 8). Al-Wafd’s party leader, Numan Gomaa says in the newspaper Al-Ahram “that be has not decided yet if he will candidate in the presidential election. He says that it is difficult to compete with Mubarak” (Item 62 (p. 26). The coming presidential election is also discussed and it is the Egyptian human rights commission that leads the way for this discussion; “the Egyptian human rights commission is behind 22 Egyptian NGOs that will supervise the coming presidential election” (Item 66 (p. 15). The Human rights commission says “that the judges shall supervise the coming presidential elections” (Item 73 (p. 14). Finally, a private person writes his opinion about the elections and states that “they are of great importance for the people”(Item 58 (p. 10).

Another subject that has attracted attention is the law concerning the political parties. In this article, various actors are giving their point of view; the People’s Assembly agrees “to adjust the law concerning political parties”. The minister of justice says “that he takes the responsibility that the political parties can work freely and guarantees their rights”. Al Shazli from NDP says “that the political parties have asked for changes in the law and that these changes have been done and there are already existing laws concerning this issue”. The opposition parties say “that the NDP has power over the electoral commission, which is unreliable” (Item 47 (p. 32). Here, the Constitutional Committee accepts improvements in some of the laws concerning political rights. The investigation group will also discuss the laws that regulate the political parties’ rights and obligations (Item 2 (p. 1). Support to the government about this matter has been noticed. The Shura Council, “fully accepts to change the political laws. The president’s consent has made it possible to change the laws for the citizens’ good” (Item 14 (p. 30). Also here, the Shura Council accepts “to change the law concerning political parties. Mubarak also agreed to the changes of law 40 from 1977 that is about the political parties. The minister of justice, Mahmoud Abou el Leil, erased some parts treating the July and May revolution in order to make the laws more democratic” (Item 9 (p. 1). A person called Dr. Abdel Alim Mohammed writes “that Egyptian politics is rebuilt, which is a
positive direction. The political parties want to cooperate and to be unanimous for the people's best” (Item 26 (p. 10). However, there are also protests against the law coming mainly from the opposition parties. Al-Wafd's party leader, Numan Gumaa, denies the law concerning political rights that the president has presented. According to him, “the laws are on NDP's side and are not of benefit to the other political parties” (Item 50 (p. 34). The Tagammu party's leader, Rifat El Saed, states that “his party goes against the adjustments in the laws, since it does not bring anything new to the constitution and the political society” (Item 51 (p. 34). The Arab Socialist Party says “that some of the adjustments in the law are positive, however, more adjustments are needed in order to achieve as democratic and free elections as possible” (Item 52 (p. 34).

Democracy is a concept that is frequently mentioned, the subsequent articles exemplify the different aspects; President Mubarak has asked for “corrections in the Constitution so that the political life in Egypt will be more democratic. In order to be more democratic it is important to educate and make the Egyptian people aware of their rights and obligations” (Item 13 (p. 14). NDP studied a new law “assuring that the election of a new board within the trade unions will be more democratic. This new law will come into force the next parliamentary election” (Item 68 (p. 14). Another aspect is given by a person who expresses his point of view saying that “different opinions are good for the development and a clear proof of a mature way of thinking and a victory for the democracy” (Item 53 (p. 10). A journalist writes that “the best the Shura Council has ever done is to let journalists choose their own board in their union”, this is democratic according to the journalist (Item 59 (p. 11). A private person protests and writes his opinion about the Egyptian people’s political rights. He means that they do not have any rights, which makes many people furious (Item 44 (p. 10).

Numerous civil society organisations are mentioned in Al-Ahram. This very article talks about Prime minister, Ahmed Nazif, who has opened a sports arena for the workers, which the trade union has financed (Item 1 (p. 1). The Bulgarian and Egyptian trade unions make an exchange and project together “aiming to ameliorate the general knowledge among the employed in the trade unions and to develop their competences” (Item 8 (p. 29). More about unions, the president of Parliament, Fathi Soror, met with Galal Arif, president of the Union of Journalists and discussed their view on the law concerning imprisonment of journalists (Item 43 (p. 1, 32). The trade unions discuss the difficulties the women are facing in the Egyptian society (Item 42 (p. 34). The president of the medical union and National Agency for Higher Education discuss proposals how to achieve equality between physicians with foreign education and physicians with Egyptian education (Item 57 (p. 29). Companies are
another civil society group that is involved in helping people. For instance, a company called, the Ixon Mobile Misr Company, “helps youth at senior level to develop their skills and prepares them to be economical, social and clever in business” (Item 16 (p. 4). A private medicine company produces medicine to its local surroundings and offers good prices and quality. This contributes to concurrence and people do not buy medicine from abroad (Item 37 (p. 11). A journalist says that “the companies build houses and hotels to stimulate the tourism” (Item 34 (p. 21). Different NGOs are mentioned in Al-Ahram here are some examples; “a charitable organization (jamiy'a khayria) collects leftovers from parties and weddings and keeps the food in the fridge and distributes it to people in need” (Item 28 (p. 2). The Arabic woman union “cooperates with 14 Arabic countries and arranged a conference in Cairo to discuss young people's problems and listen to their opinions” (Item 72 (p. 39). Furthermore, a youth business association and NGOs “arranged a conference with the aim to activate NGOs in the economical development and to discuss the procedure” (Item 55 (p. 17). The only time a religious organisation was found is in the following article; the United Muslim Research Institute discusses donation of organs (Item 20 (p. 35). Universities are also mentioned; Cairo University and American University in Cairo “meet to find solutions to the health and environmental problems, especially pollution in the agriculture and they discuss the reasons behind the pollutions” (Item 29 (p. 14). Another article writes about universities in Egypt and Syria that “cooperate to establish exchange programs” (Item 30 (p. 14). A protest from a civil society organisation has been found. Here, a university that teaches laser technique and treats people with laser has an apparatus that is out of order since three months. The ministry of education and the ministry of health should have taken action but nothing has happened yet (Item 4 (p. 11). Also support to the government has been found. The following articles show this; the ministry of education “gives 20 million dollar to children in 18 municipalities. The teachers are offered to attend study circles to develop themselves and modernize the education system at the junior stage” (Item 7 (p. 15). Jamiyat ahlia have "asked the government for support to carry out its activities in the economical field which has been observed by the government" (Item 61 (p. 15). At the same page these two articles were found; “The woman and child organization and Unicef organize a conference with the theme: Teachers who flog their pupils shall be punished” (Item 17 (p. 15). Susan Mubarak, the president’s wife, says in a meeting with a UN child expert that “the government and the people work together to fight violence against children” (Item 18 (p. 15).

Bearing in mind the findings from the newspapers, next chapter will discuss them in relation to the theoretical framework.
11 Conclusion

The main purpose of this essay is to examine the depiction of civil society in Egyptian newspapers. The concept of civil society and its renowned organisations, NGOs, have been developed and employed as part of a frame of reference within which to analyze the depictions of civil society in media in contemporary Egyptian society. This chapter answers the questions in the purpose and deals with the findings of the newspapers and discusses them in the light of the theory.

It was made clear in the theoretical part of the essay that providing a precise definition of civil society has proven problematic. However, for the purpose of this essay, civil society is defined as an intermediate arena between the individual and the state. In this regard, civil society represents interests of different sectors in society via, for instance, trade unions, professional syndicates, political parties and business associations. The concept also represents the idealist concern of society at large through human rights advocacy groups. Moreover, an NGO is defined as an independent organization with the ambition to assist poor and marginalized people. Additionally, NGOs and other formal organized associations are seen as constituting elements of civil society. Thus, it is important to understand that these associations operate in relation to the state, that is, they affect and are affected by the state. For instance, the state may affect and limit an NGO’s activity through laws, regulations and government funding. NGOs may also affect the state by influencing the public opinion.

Civil society under President Hosni Mubarak has witnessed significant expansion. This has been mirrored in relatively greater freedom of expression, particularly of the press, the licensing of publications, the growing numbers of political parties and the expansion in the numbers of officially registered NGOs. Today, most forms of popular participation take place through civil society organisations. Egyptian civil society is in general seen as a form of social life situated somewhere between the state and people. It is largely characterized by a diverse group of agencies, organisations and NGOs and comprises trade unions, professional syndicates and political parties. However, Mubarak’s government has decided to maintain the control over civil society, mostly codified in law, which he had inherited from his predecessors. Several factors contribute to that civil society remains a weak entity under Mubarak. The power and control MOSA has, makes it able to exclude unwanted organisations from civil participation and the obligatory registration with the MOSA impedes the possibilities for NGOs to develop independently. The continuous renewal of
emergency rule provides the government with the legal right to control every level of political activity, including that within the confines of the formally defined political arena. The government is entitled, for instance, to censor activities including freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and censoring and closing down newspapers in the name of national security.

The theoretical part of the essay states that the opposition newspapers often publish criticism of government than state-run newspapers do. This has also been found in the analysis of the newspapers. Several actors of importance in contemporary Egyptian society criticize the president and government officials in al-Wafd. In one of the articles a famous actor refuses recording a TV series about Mubarak’s time in power and states that “an important part of democracy is to let the Egyptian people themselves choose their president”. Another famous Egyptian person, the director and critic, Osama Anwar Okasha, writes “that a party’s crisis is also the state’s crisis. The principle: “let them talk and close your ears” is applied by the persons in authority”. Okasha is a well-known newspaper columnist who often criticizes government officials and policies. Interestingly, the former chief of Al-Ahram criticizes the president and that he has held power for long time (Item 11 (p. 5). The fact that well-known and important persons in the contemporary Egyptian society criticize the government and President Mubarak himself indicate in practice an increased tolerance of freedom of speech in the contemporary Egyptian society. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, which is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to defending press freedom worldwide, the last years editorials and opinion pieces openly questioned Mubarak and his policies, even in daily newspapers such as Al-Ahram. However, no direct criticism towards the president or government officials was found in Al-Ahram. The large occurrence of support to the government found in the empirical part further confirms the theory that Al-Ahram mainly follows the government’s line. The support has mainly come from the government and state friendly journalists. This does not imply that a state controlled newspaper such as Al-Ahram does not openly question Mubarak’s policies. Nevertheless, the findings from the chosen newspapers serve the ground for this discussion.

Protests in Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd come primarily from the opposition parties expressing their view on the law concerning the political parties. The common view of the opposition parties are that the law concerning political parties is only of benefit of the dominant government party, NDP. Indeed, the political parties play a significant role in the public debate. Political parties constitute the central link between the citizen and those in power.
The parties’ function is partly to articulate the citizens’ requirements and wish to the rulers, but also to firmly establish the party’s politics with the people. The opposition parties’ protests against the domination of NDP clearly reflect the theory that the president Hosni Mubarak has institutionalized a dominant party system, which consists of a large government party, the NDP. This situation has permitted the NDP party to have great power of the political activity in Egypt, which in turn has benefited the party and the president, who is the party leader. Interestingly, findings from Al-Wafd show that there are examples when the government has met the political parties’ demands. For instance, “Al-Wafd should have demonstrated for the changes of the laws concerning the political parties but cancelled the demonstration because the government agreed on Al-Wafd’s conditions”. Another time “Al-Wafd wanted to cancel article 17 of the law and the parliament promised to make changes in the law concerning the political parties”. This accommodating from the state’s side is a sign of progress for the Egyptian civil society which clearly raises pressure on the state.

The discussion about the division of power in Egypt and the occurrence of new civil society actors, such as the parliament, were found in the empirical part of the essay but not in the theoretical framework. As argued in the method there has been openness to occurrences of other actors that are not mentioned in the theory. Thus, the discussion about the imbalance between the legislative and executive branches has been taken into consideration. The following two articles in Al-Wafd reflect this discussion; a member of the Shura Council (Majlis Al-Shura) is against article 6 that is contrary to parliamentary laws. “The law says that when the president of the Shura Council holds a speech, he is not supposed to talk on the president’s behalf but from the parliament’s behalf”. The president of the parliament admits “that those who listen to the government get lost. The parliament should actually supervise the executive power, however, this is not the case in Egypt and this has brought negative consequences to the country”. The president is not only the head of the executive branch but also has enormous legislative powers and is the leader of the dominant party in the parliament. This contributes to a significant blurred separation of powers between the executive and the legislative branch. The very fact that President Mubarak appoints the speaker of the People’s Assembly directs the parliament’s loyalty towards the president and his executive machinery. Not only does this casts doubts on the legitimacy of the Egyptian parliament it also marginalize the role of the opposition in general. As the empirical part illustrates, there are inherent contradictions embodied in the constitution that highlight the weakness of the Egyptian political system.
Civil Society in Egypt

The descriptions of journalists’ difficult situation in media agree with the theory. The journalists are a vulnerable group in the community and in order to make their voice heard, I believe they choose to express their opinions and protest in the opposition newspaper, since criticism of the government is more frequent there and the tolerance of freedom of speech is higher. Protests and demonstrations against the law that gives the authorities right to imprison journalists who publish anything against the government were found in Al-Wafd. Journalists accuse the government and the authorities of “detesting them and ignoring their rights”. They also claim that “the president does not keep his promises, that is, not to imprison a journalist for publication”. Demonstrations are their main possibility of communications with the state. As described in the theoretical part of the essay, criticizing journalists are regarded as a threat to the regime and to the national security. Furthermore, the emergency laws have been used for decades to override constitutional guarantees of citizens’ rights. The emergency laws impact the work and personal safety of journalists, intellectuals and human rights advocates by giving the government scope for silencing critics in the name of national security. Another factor that controls and limits the journalists’ rights and freedom in Egypt is that journalists cannot choose which union to belong to. By law, if they are not full members of the one and only Egyptian Journalists Syndicate, they may not work as journalists or be hired by any publisher or news agency.

For Egypt, the main deficit in a democratic context is its electoral law which does not give enough fair space to representatives from competitive political parties in its political system. It is rather shaped in favour for Egyptian elite, who does not necessarily represent the variety of the people. The role of civil society and its efforts of raising public opinion and creating public debate are crucial in the Egyptian society. Even though Egypt is modern in many aspects, it is still a traditional society where order is upheld by personalized authoritarian rule and religious forces. Despite the restrictions imposed on the Egyptian civil society, findings from the newspapers indicate that the public sphere is active in practice with an impact on the political life. Both newspapers mention that the human rights commission and 22 NGOs will supervise the forthcoming elections. This indicates a great progress for the civil society in Egypt which raises pressure on the state. Here, the empirical part and theoretical framework say the same that most forms of popular participation take place through civil society organisations. Egyptian civil society is in general seen as a form of social life situated somewhere between the state and people.
Trade unions are among those civil society organisations that were frequently mentioned in Al-Ahram. In the majority of the articles, the trade unions discussed issues with the authorities or government officials. It seems to me that it is of the government’s interest to depict the trade unions in Al-Ahram as independent from the government and that they have much to say in their activities. However, as the theory points out, the autonomy of trade unions has been marginalized to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish them from state.

Other NGOs that have been found in the newspapers, such as charitable organisations, business associations, universities and human rights groups et cetera, are seen as mobilizing factors in civil society. The following examples from the analysis confirm the theory saying that the aim of the NGOs is to assist poor and marginalized. They also affect the state by influencing the public opinion. For instance, Dr. Nabil Helmi Amin, the president of a human rights organisation called Jamiat al Ansar and former minister Adel Abd el Baki who has the main responsibility “arrange a discussion forum where the new laws are being discussed in order to ameliorate the political situation in Egypt”. Also, the political parties play an important role in this discussion and they try to engage the Egyptian people and make them aware of the political situation in the country. Here comes an example where several political parties arrange a conference with the “intention to give people freedom to express their opinions, discuss the cancellation of the Emergency laws and to get a more democratic government, that is, to give other political parties than the NDP more mandates in the government “. The intensity of public debate raised by civil society groups may increase participation and transparency in the political life and, in the long-run, counteract the power domination in the political system.

In the theoretical framework it was stated that it is inevitable to analyze the concept of civil society without mentioning the religious aspect. Further, religion and civil society are intertwined and Islam remains an inherent part of Egypt’s social and political sphere. However, only one article in Al-Wafd mentions a religious organisation, that is, the Muslim brotherhood. The group is, in fact, both a political movement and a social welfare agency and is the single most important opposition group to Mubarak’s ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Likewise, Al-Wafd, the only time a religious organisation was found in Al-Ahram is in the following article; “the United Muslim Research Institute discusses donation of organs”. Despite the fact that religion is of great importance for the Egyptian civil society, the findings from the newspapers show that theory is not like practice. Many religious organisations are regarded by the state as a threat. For instance, the Muslim
Brotherhood, Egypt’s largest Islamic group is banned by the government, which prohibits political parties with a stated religious agenda.

Finally, while conducting research the following question crossed my mind; is civil society an appropriate concept to discuss from a Middle East perspective? As described in the background, there are scholars who characterize the civil society concept as a Western notion that is not applicable to other non-Western societies. Some Western scholars argue this case by stating that non-Western societies simply cannot develop along European trajectories. However, this essay has proven the opposite. Although, Egyptian civil society operates under a number of formal restrictions, this essay has shown that Egypt has an active public sphere and a mélange of associations, clubs, syndicates, unions, parties and groups that come together to provide a buffer between state and citizen. The Middle East and the Arab world, has long been studied as unit of analysis. Despite many similarities between the countries of the region, there are differences in terms of their cultural and political character, social and economic structures and historical processes that should prevent any attempt to make unified generalizations about the Middle East. Furthermore, scholars and academics stating that the concept of civil society cannot be used in other countries than only Western countries have already decided what the concept signifies. Similarly, democracy is also a Western concept that has developed out of Western political philosophy as well as from set a set of specific Western historical processes. For instance, India is the world’s largest democracy. Yet, to some there exist no democracy in India. Regardless of how civil society and the related concept of democracy is understood in the Western contexts, cannot be the basis for making conclusions about the nature of civil societies in other parts of the world, nor can they be reproduced to match their Western counterparts identically.
12 Discussion

The following method and approach used in this essay can be seen as a model in which to analyze the depiction of civil societies in media in other countries. I argue with reference to Islam in contemporary Egypt, that civil society is an appropriate concept and framework of analysis to apply to Egypt. As demonstrated in this essay Egypt fulfils the criteria of having a civil society. It has an active public sphere and the press has relative great freedom of expression. To think from a Western perspective and only consider the civil society concept applicable on Western countries excludes the fact that other countries have civil societies as well. This is a one-sided manner of thinking and does not take the specific country’s political, social and economic dimensions into consideration. I think it is far more interesting to examine the concept of civil society in its context. By doing so the implication of the notion will be widened and thus bring new insight to the research.

The theoretical framework is based upon conceptual development and conceptual investigation and the empirical part of content analysis. The main purpose with the theory is to develop the civil society and NGO concepts. These concepts are then put into an Egyptian context. The empirical part examines the Egyptian civil society in practice by scanning and analyzing Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd. The content analysis was applied on the newspapers where questions to the text were asked to find out which civil society actors occurred in the press and what they said. The results from the newspapers in relation to the theory made me come to the conclusion what the Egyptian newspapers depict regarding civil society. It has been an extensive work and the essay has been knowledge and time consuming in order to make fair interpretations of the civil society in Egypt.

I have been open to the Egyptian society since I have studied the concept from an Egyptian perspective. As demonstrated in the conclusion, many findings from the empirical part confirm the theoretical framework. However, some of the actors that were not mentioned in the theoretical part of the essay have emerged in the findings from the newspapers. As argued in the method, there has been openness to occurrence of other actors that are not mentioned in the theory. For instance, the parliament is an actor that was found in the analysis and which has been taken into consideration in the conclusion. The discussion about the division of power in Egypt was found in the empirical part of the essay but not in the theoretical framework. This discussion shows in practice that developments with regard to the separation of powers have not worked in favour of civil society. The exercise of power in Egypt is highly centralised, both functionally and
geographically and the best hope to push accountability is by taking advantage of checks and balances that may exist through the separation of executive, legislative and judicial branches. I may be very optimistic but I believe that the statement from the president of the parliament who claims that the parliament does not fulfil its duties to supervise the executive power will hopefully affect the decision-makers. The dissatisfaction comes from an important institution which may have this impact on the regime.

Moreover, all the civil society actors mentioned in theory were found in media. This indicates that there are more actors in the reality expressing their point of views and showing dissatisfaction with the power of the regime. One observation worth mentioning is the weak and dependent trade unions. The government’s repressive policies have held back the emergence of autonomous organisations and made them lose their power and impact. The question is what can this kind of organisation contribute to civil society? I believe that there is a mutual interest from both parties that the trade unions are visible in the press. On the one hand, the state has an interest to show the public that the trade unions are free from state intervention and on the other hand, the trade unions have an interest to be visible in the press, since the alternative would not be visible at all. The attention the trade unions are given in a state controlled media such as Al-Ahram legitimizes their debate even though it is under controlled circumstances.

The relation between state and religion demonstrates that theory is not like practice. Only one article in each of the two newspapers writes about religious organisations. I believe that the lack of a separation between religion and state (as occurred in the West) and the predominance of Islamic tradition has resulted in the lack of a tradition of ‘corporate intermediaries’ between the individual and the state, which is a necessary condition for the development of an active civil society. Furthermore, the Egyptian government has prohibited the Muslim Brotherhood to act on the political arena, since they are regarded as a threat to the regime. The government’s repressive policy has made the Muslim Brotherhood to use other communications and tactics to reach the people. The Islamist forces are largely the product of the system’s authoritarian policies. I believe they use other communications than media on a more local level to reach the people, such as mosques and through development and social programs. To study which communications or channels the religious organisations use and to who they turn in the society is an interesting topic for further research.
Moreover, the reason why I have chosen media in general and print media in particular as a means to examine the depiction of civil society in contemporary Egypt is because it has a major role in enhancing development and stimulating grassroots participation. This role takes various aspects such as, providing alternative points of view, enlarging horizons and influencing convictions and values to transform the traditional culture into a culture of participation. It also stimulates new ways to move from awareness and reasoning to action and practice. The media could do more to provide an open arena where people could express their own ideas, vision to support civil society institutions and put democratic principles in place. This would require forming a political culture that strengthens the values of democratic practice, civil society, freedom of thoughts and tolerance and acceptance of different opinions. Another means to examine civil society could have been broadcast media. However, since I did not carry out my research in Egypt it is more convenient to examine print media.

Research is about personal participation and it is difficult for the researcher to be completely objective, since the researcher is affected by own valuations and pre-understanding. I have tried to do my best regarding the choice of literature to affect the credibility and validity of the essay in a positive direction. I have roots from Egypt and this has made me to think carefully about objectivity along with the research process in order not to affect the results of the essay. It is clearly an advantage that I am familiar with the culture since this facilitates my understanding for the Egyptian society. Moreover, maybe the results of this essay would have been different if I had better command of written Arabic to read through the articles myself without the help from my dad and aunt or if I would have analyzed other newspapers another period. However, I think that the time before the presidential election when the political debate was intense was a good period to analyze, since many actors were involved and expressed their points of view.

As a final remark I would like to include my own experience that I believe is an indication of the Egyptian government’s authoritarian rule and people’s points of view. I was in Egypt during June and July 2005 and the newspapers I have analyzed are also coming from that time. During my visit, there were intense political debates about the presidential election. It was very interesting for me to follow the debate and to be in Egypt at that time. The possibility to discuss with people and get to know their points of view was a valuable experience. I learned that the majority of the people that I spoke to were afraid of getting a new president. This is because they do not know if the new one will be even more hungry
for power. The general view is that the current president Hosni Mubarak is satisfied which means that he has had enough of success. In other words, the Egyptian people are considered to be better safe than sorry.

An example of interesting further studies would be to write a similar essay after the next presidential election and to see how the conclusion would differ from this essay. Another question that would be interesting to study is the relation between Islam and the concept of democracy in an Arabic country. Western observers assert that democracy and Islam are incompatible. However, as this essay has shown there are no obvious answers.
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